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ELI ZBOROWSKI — A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

As the co-authors of Eli Zborowski: A Life of Leadership, we are pleased to present this essay as a memorial tribute on the occasion of Eli's 10th yahrzeit. Utilizing excerpts from the book, we explore the life of a remarkable man whose resolute leadership encompassed a range of communal and global endeavors. Eli was our colleague, friend and mentor. In the decade since his death, we have frequently recalled his strength, his wisdom and especially his wealth of Yiddish expressions. He truly touched our minds and hearts.

John C. Maxwell in The Indispensable Qualities of a Leader said, "Leadership is the expression of courage that compels people to do the right thing." As World War II began to rage in his hometown of Zarki, Eli, then only a teenager, began to take risks and accept responsibility. At age 14, Eli joined the Jewish underground, where he served as a courier between the ghettos in western Poland. On many occasions he exhibited the calm and courage that Ernest Hemingway described as "grace under pressure."

AT HOME IN ZARKI

Eli's third year of life was marked by a highly dramatic event — his *opshern*, his first haircut. In this religious practice, a boy's hair remains unshorn until he is three years old. It is a custom dating back to the sixteenth-century sacred law that holds that children are like trees in the field which may not be harvested during their first years of blooming. Eli sat dejectedly on a high stool staring at the floor as family members and friends who had gathered to witness this milestone sat staring at him. He fought back tears as one golden lock after another fell to the floor. He would



miss his long blond tresses, so frequently and affectionately caressed by his doting grandmother and aunts.

Eli was a bright child who read voraciously and excelled in math. He said: "When I was growing up my parents hoped that I would be a lawyer. It made me feel very good about myself that my father thought I would be a good lawyer. Had it not been for the war, I probably would have entered the legal profession."

THE WAR COMES TO ZARKI

During the first years of the war, Eli continued his work with the ZOB, a Jewish resistance movement. However, when his father went missing, he joined his mother, Zisel, and two younger siblings,

Tzilia and Mendel, who were hiding with a Polish family named Placzek.

In August 1944, after the Zborowskis had been in hiding eighteen months, Placzek came home from a drinking bout with a German officer who had brought very unwelcome news. The German officer said that he heard that Placzek was hiding Jews! For the Zborowski family this was a clear sign that they could no longer remain with Placzek. They left that night just after midnight, headed for the home of a Polish family that was hiding Zisel's relatives. Because of the curfew, they could not just walk through the center of town. They decided instead to walk through the fields and forest around the perimeter of *Zarki* to reach their destination in *Bobolice*. This made the seventeen-kilometer journey considerably longer than it would have been by road. Eli recalled the trip:

"Because we did not want to be detected, we walked only in the fields. It was just after a rain, and the wheat that normally stood up lay flat on the ground. Every time we put our feet down, our legs became tangled in the wheat. At one point, we had to jump over a small creek in order to continue on the other side. When my brother jumped, his legs failed him. He tripped, badly spraining an ankle, and therefore couldn't walk. At seventeen, I was now the head of the family. I had to carry him the rest of the way. Because I couldn't carry him and our two rucksacks as well, I walked two meters with the sacks and then went back to carry Mendel. That is how we advanced until nightfall. In the darkness, I once lost my way and could not find my brother. When I finally located him, I decided that we could no longer be separated. From then on I never let him out of my sight. At daybreak, witnessing the strain on me of carrying him and our rucksacks, Mendel begged to simply be left in the for-

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AUBURN TIGERS VISIT YAD VASHEM

On August 3rd, the Auburn Tigers, a 1st Division NCAA college basketball team from Auburn University in Alabama, visited Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, as part of their 10-day tour of Israel. Their meaningful experience at Yad Vashem included a guided tour of the Holocaust History Museum.



Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan greeted the team's coach, Bruce Pearl, and the Auburn Tigers teammates and retold the group a story about his own tour of the Civil Rights Trail, which he took while serving as consul general for the State of Israel in New York.

Dayan remarked: "Like my trip in the footsteps of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr., your visit today to Yad Vashem is a journey through history. The Holocaust is the representation of humanity's lowest point, a time when all morality and justice were lost to an ideology that deemed Jews subhuman. Today we must fight hatred and anti-Semitism in all its forms, in order to ensure that history is never allowed to repeat itself."

At the end of the visit, the group visited the Children's Memorial dedicated to the 1.5 million Jewish children murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators. Coach Bruce Pearl also signed the Yad Vashem guest book on behalf of the team. There he re-

marked: "The pictures on the walls of this museum are the pictures of my family; the children remembered here are our children. We pledge that when we go back home, we will continue to tell their stories." American Society for Yad Vashem Executive Director Stanley Stone, Co-Chair Adina Burian and her husband, Board Member Lawrence Burian, accompanied

the Auburn Tigers throughout Yad Vashem. At the conclusion of the visit, Lawrence, son of Andrew Burian, who survived the infamous Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp, addressed the group. Relating his father's survival story, and how he went on to rebuild his life and family, Burian stated:

"What you saw today in the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem is an example

of what can happen when we allow hate, intolerance, violence and discrimination to take hold. Our society is only as strong as the people who support its values and prin-



ciples are. As an influential group, you have a responsibility to lead by example and to speak out whenever and wherever you see injustice and hate."

The entire Auburn Tigers team was presented with a copy of Andrew Burian's memoirs, *A Boy from Buština*, which was published by Yad Vashem.

ASYV WELCOMES A NEW CFO

The American Society for Yad Vashem is proud to welcome Rona Gottlib Bochenek as its new chief financial officer. Rona's responsibilities at ASYV include managing its day-to-day financial operations, tracking financial metrics to ensure the overall financial health of the organization, and making recommendations to the executive director and board of directors in all areas of financial compliance and other financial matters.



Rona was born and raised in *Ramat Gan*, Israel, to parents who were also born in Israel. After completing her undergraduate degree there in accounting, she earned her Masters in Public Administration at NYU, and has devoted herself ever since to working in the not-for-profit space. After spending 10 years at the Hebrew Free Loan Society, Rona spent time as the global controller for The Kaballah Centre, followed most recently by her work as chief financial officer of the Sephardic Bikur Holim.

When asked about her new position at the American Society for Yad Vashem, Rona admits that growing up in Israel, she knew Yad Vashem was a significant and important institution. She therefore truly feels it an honor to be a part of the professional team at ASYV. Getting to help fulfill Yad Vashem's mission to safeguard and impart the memory of the victims and the events of the *Shoah* is of deep significance to her.

In fact, her entire journey into the non-profit Jewish professional space is a reflection of Rona's wanting to be remembered for doing something helpful for people. Rona very deliberately channeled her skill with numbers and her financial acumen towards helping nonprofits achieve their mission.

Rona lives in Manhattan together with her husband, eight-year-old daughter and six-year-old son. She enjoys watching sports, and loves doing arts and crafts with her kids.

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est. Before we left to go into hiding, my father made me promise to take care of our mother and my two younger siblings. I did not leave Mendel alone. We ultimately reached *Bobolice* and our second hiding place,”

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

When Eli, with his expectant wife, Diana, arrived in New York, he hit the ground running. It never occurred to him to find a job working for someone else. His training at his father’s side was selling, and he would sell for himself. But what would he sell? He had little cash and no credit. Eli’s past experience of

years I was president of Shaeffer, I steadily increased sales. Our factories in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina were running near capacity, and by 1970 I employed 750 loyal workers. Sheaffer Latin America had become a significant factor in the continent’s economy,”

COMMUNAL LEADERSHIP

Eli is a person others chose to follow. He projected strength and never saw himself as a victim. This made him astonishingly effective in the Jewish communal world, where he served in leadership positions. His contribution to Holocaust remembrance has gained him worldwide recognition. Perhaps the most outstand-

the cause of remembrance *m’dor l’dor* — from generation to generation.

RISKS AND REWARDS

Asked why he was willing to take risks not imposed on him, Eli responded, “It’s all relative. Our underlying situation was filled with risk: I could be shot crossing the street. Under those circumstances, the things I did just did not seem to add much to the risk of daily living.” He was a rational risk-taker who used risk to achieve his goals.

Eli Zborowski’s journey from survivor to entrepreneur to communal leader has led him to:

- Rescue 100 Holocaust orphans and lead them to the DP camp in *Feldafing*, Germany, where he established a model youth center
- Open the door for diplomatic relations between Israel and Poland following the Six-Day War
- Organize the first umbrella organization of Holocaust survivors in 1970
- Publish *Martyrdom & Resistance*, the first newspaper about issues related to the Holocaust
- Establish the world’s first academic chair in Holocaust studies at Yeshiva University
- Found and chair the American Society for Yad Vashem in 1981

“Eli Zborowski was the most important and central figure of our generation in perpetuating the holy commandment *zachor v’lo tishkach* — to remember and not to forget.”

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau
Former Chief Rabbi, State of Israel

BY ROCHEL AND GEORGE BERMAN

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rochel Berman served as executive director of the American Society for Yad Vashem from 2000 to 2002. She is the author of *Dignity Beyond Death: The Jewish Preparation for Burial*, winner of a Koret International Jewish Book Award.

George Berman earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Yale University and an MBA from Columbia University. He served in the United States Naval Reserve and as director for operations planning for Philip Morris. The Bermans live in Boca Raton, Florida.



Eli Zborowski (left) rides through the streets of *Zarki* disguised as a woman. He used this disguise regularly to sneak out of hiding, and is pictured here alongside Jozef Kolacz, a farmer who helped hide him and his relatives.

stepping in where there existed an unfulfilled need became the foundation of how he made a living. Identifying such opportunities, in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, he triumphed brilliantly. The young immigrant who began peddling camera parts door to door in midtown Manhattan became the president of Sheaffer Latin America. His acute awareness led to one success after another, from importing goose feathers from Poland, to selling cellular telephones in Latin America, to building an office complex in the Bronx.

Sheaffer Pen Latin America was a centerpiece of Eli’s business career. He proudly recalls: “During the twenty-five

ing among these endeavors was organizing the first synagogue-based *Yom Hashoah* commemoration in the United States in 1964 — an event that has become institutionalized in synagogues throughout the country. In 1981 he founded the American and International Societies for Yad Vashem. Under Eli’s leadership, this organization raised \$100 million for Yad Vashem.

To ensure the memory of the Holocaust in the future, Eli spearheaded the Young Leadership Associates of the American Society for Yad Vashem. This vibrant and committed group of young people in their 20s and 30s will shepherd

ESCAPE FROM *TREBLINKA* — THE JOSEPH POLONSKI STORY

The remarkable life of Joseph Polonski, ז"ל, is the subject of the short film *Escape from Treblinka*, which has been featured over the last two years at film festivals all across the country.

The film presents the highlights of Joseph Polonski's life from a young child in prewar Poland, to the Jewish ghetto, and ultimately to *Treblinka*, the Nazi death camp. He miraculously escaped the camp, only to be recaptured and sent back to *Treblinka*, from where he launched an unprecedented second successful escape.

Joseph spent the rest of the war serving as an officer in the resistance where he remained until liberation. After the war he spent time in a DP camp, at which he learned electronics, which served him incredibly well after he emigrated to the United States. Joseph went on to raise a beautiful family and build a thriving, successful electronics business in Omaha, Nebraska.

According to daughter Sonia Breslow,

the legacy that Polonski instilled in his children was the importance of one's name and reputation. Joseph lived his life by the value that one's name is everything and

hard work. Despite his own professional success, Joseph impressed upon his children the importance of hard work. As young teenagers, the Polonski children

were all expected to work on the weekends, and if there was something they wanted, they were encouraged to work and save for it. Joseph wanted his children to learn to work hard for what they wanted and to never take what wasn't theirs.

These lessons of hard work and the importance of personal reputation were taken to heart by all four of the Polonski children. Joseph didn't discuss the war with his children when they were little, but as adults, he took them all to his childhood home, to his ghetto, and to *Treblinka*. He shared with them the full, unadulterated story of his life

and how he came to be the person they knew. It goes without saying that his children appreciated their father's work ethic and his dignity and honorable reputation in a way far deeper than they ever could have before.



Joseph and Bluma Polonski, center, with their children, grandchildren and a great grandchild.

that if you have a good and honorable name, that is what lives on long after you are gone. He drilled that into his children and made sure they understood that one's personal reputation is everything.

The other value that he stood for was

AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE EICHMANN TRIAL

“I told Adolf Eichmann my name and that I was an Israel Police commander. He saw the number tattooed on my arm, which spoke for itself and didn't require any further explanation. Neither did he ask me any questions. For most of the interrogation, Eichmann kept a poker face, but every once in a while we saw that he was getting annoyed and uneasy, especially when we showed him letters from that period with his signature at the bottom of the page,” recounts retired Chief Inspector Michael (Mickey) Goldman-Gilad, one of the police officers who were heavily involved in Eichmann's interrogation after he was captured.

The recently launched *Bureau 06: Adolf Eichmann's Interrogation by Israel Police* tells the story of the special police unit that was formed to interrogate Eichmann.

“The book was published to mark the 60th anniversary of the formation of Bureau 06,” explains commander Dr. Yossi Hemi, who has a doctorate in Jewish history, is the deputy commander of the Israel Police Heritage Center, and was in charge of the research and writing of the book.

“One of our goals was to bring to light

the story of the interrogation itself, of which Bureau 06 had been put charge,” continues Hemi.



Michael (Mickey) Goldman-Gilad, as the young police officer who was heavily involved in Eichmann's interrogation after he was captured.

“The evidence that was collected during the investigation played a crucial role in Eichmann's conviction. The book opens with the story of Bureau 06, including who founded it, who its interrogators were, behind-the-scenes stories, and requests that were sent to the bureau by Israeli citizens. The second part of the book delineates the role Eichmann played in the 'Final Solution' up until his capture and identification, which took place upon arrival in Israel. The

third and main part of the book covers the gathering of evidence, the interrogation of Eichmann, the examination of documents and the testimonials collected from Holocaust survivors.”

Only 1,000 copies of the book's first edition were printed; they were then distributed to police officers, historians and others who work in related fields.

“Our next step is to look into the possibility of making this book available to people outside of the police who might be interested in the subject,” Hemi explains.

Goldman-Gilad was born in *Katowice*, Poland. When the Second World War broke out, he fled with his parents, brothers and sister to *Przemysl*, and then from there he was deported to *Szebnie* labor camp. In November 1943, he was sent to *Birkenau*, and then after six weeks to *Auschwitz III-Monowitz*.

Goldman-Gilad succeeded in escaping during the death march and hid with a Polish family. In early 1945, he joined the Red Army. In May 1947, he boarded the immigrant ship *Hatikva* that set sail for the Land of Israel. The British seized the ship at sea,

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NEW BOARD MEMBERS OF THE ASYV

Sam Shamie
Sam and his wife Nancy got involved in ASYV after attending a dinner sponsored by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2008, and came to realize that Yad



Vashem was where they wanted to focus their efforts. They decided that supporting Holocaust education and remembrance was very important to them and made it their main philanthropic focus. They decided that they didn't want the world to forget this premeditated genocide against the Jewish people. Sam fortunately does not have a personal family connection to the *Shoah*, but believes educating, remembering and never forgetting what was done to our people is critical. And sadly, it has never been more important than it is today.

Loren Weiss
Loren, our ASYV Tri-State Region Chair, and his wife Andrea first got involved after being invited by Lenny Wilf to an ASYV Gala, where they got to hear from and meet survivors and their families. They felt the profound dedication of the founding families to be highly inspiring. Loren's family left Europe in the late '20s, but nevertheless considers the victims, the survivors and all generations of Jews to be cousins.

The relevancy of Holocaust remembrance today is that it supports a strong Israel and a strong Jewish community, reminds us to



fight anti-Semitism and reinforces the preciousness of life and safety. Loren feels that we all have an obligation to learn its lessons and never forget.

Gonen Paradis
Gonen is the grandchild of four Holocaust survivors, so Holocaust remembrance has always played a prominent



role in his life. His first direct involvement with Yad Vashem was introducing his grandparents, Arie and Eva Halpern, to

over 1,000 guests at an annual Gala. His wife Jaclyn helped develop the Young Leadership Society, and Gonen today serves on ASYV's development committee. With Holocaust trivialization and inaccuracies on the rise, he feels it's more important than ever before to spread truth to prevent a return to the darkness and evil of the past. With fewer and fewer survivors alive to tell their stories, it is now our responsibility to teach future generations the meaning of "Never Again."

Benjamin Warren
Benjamin is the son of two Holocaust survivors, and following the example set by his mother Naomi, one of the early founders of the Holocaust Museum Hous-



ton in 1996, he became a leader there as well for many years. Benjamin believes that Yad Vashem is the global central address for *Shoah* remembrance, and that it bears the responsibility for keeping the torch of remembrance lit. As we face a world with no survivors, the spirit of those who perished and the legacy of those who survived need to remain relevant and continue to inspire.

DEPORTATIONS OF JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

On August 30, 1944, Avraham Benkel and his 14-year-old son Shmuel were deported from the *Lodz* ghetto on the last transport to Auschwitz. "The Germans addressed us, and said that in Germany, too, they would establish a fur workshop and that we would work there in the same way we worked here," Benkel testified. "Later on, it became clear that this was false, and that they were sending us to Auschwitz, not to Germany.... As soon as we arrived at Auschwitz, we heard from the Jews unloading us from the cars that here, people were sent to the cremato-

ria.... They separated me from my son.... I saw him standing on the other side, waving to me. I waved back. I never saw him again." Benkel was the lone survivor from his family.
By the summer of 1944, the demise of Nazi Germany seemed inevitable, but despite this, the machinery of extermination relentlessly continued to operate at full strength. While parts of Europe had already been liberated, the last Jews were being deported from areas still under the control of the Germans.
Utilizing documentation, photographs, artworks and testimonies from Yad

Vashem's collections, the online exhibition "Deportations of Jews During the Holocaust" tells the heartbreaking stories of individuals, families and communities who were brutally pushed into cattle cars and transported on a journey full of unbearable torment, degradation, abuse and pain. Masses of Jews from across Europe were deported in the last months of the war from their homes, transit camps and the last ghettos still standing, and were taken to concentration and death camps, sometimes just days before the liberators arrived.
On August 17, 1944, a day before the
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AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE EICHMANN TRIAL

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and Goldman-Gilad ended up in a detention camp in Cyprus. After Israel was declared a state, he reached Israel and joined the Israel Police.

In the months leading up to the Eichmann trial however, Goldman-Gilad had not been working for the Israel Police.

"In 1958, I left the police because of the meager salary I was receiving," he recalls. "We wanted to have another child and so I needed to find a better-paying job. But then when [Prime Minister David] Ben-Gurion announced that Eichmann had been captured [on May 23, 1960], I immediately wrote to then – police chief Yosef Nachmias, offering him my services. They offered me a chance to return to the police, and I agreed on the condition that I received a higher rank. They agreed, and that's how I began my work with Bureau 06 as a commander."

What was your motive for offering your services to the police?

"Well, I knew German, Polish, Russian and Yiddish, which was important for communicating with the witnesses who testified. I was convinced that I could be of help. I was certainly not doing this as a way to come full circle — I don't think that any of us can ever come to terms with the horrors we experienced — but I was convinced that I could assist with the interrogation of Eichmann. I felt it was a moral imperative to offer my help."

Goldman-Gilad recalls that the unit numbered close to 40 individuals, "including a commander (Avraham 'Rami' Selinger, I.S.), his deputy (Ephraim Elrom Hofstaetter, I.S.), 12 investigative officers, technicians and translators," he describes. "The investigation encompassed all of the European countries that had been under German occupation or influence, which numbered 18 countries. We split up the investigation into regions. I was put in charge of Poland, the USSR, the Baltics, Latvia, Estonia, as well as all of the extermination camps located in the region to which Jews had been transported from all over Europe.

"I knew who Eichmann was," continues Goldman-Gilad. "When the *Nuremberg* trials of Nazi war criminals began, I carefully followed the protocols. I knew that Eichmann had headed the Gestapo Department for Jewish Affairs, and was responsible for sending Europe's Jews to extermination camps, including *Treblinka*, *Auschwitz*, *Sobibor* and *Belzec*. My parents and sister perished in *Belzec*, along

with close to 40 members of my extended family. I had a brother who'd been inducted into the Red Army. I was sure he'd been killed during the war, but I found him 17 years later."

What was it like the first time you met Eichmann?

"I'd always pictured him like he was in the photo, wearing his uniform. Then suddenly in April 1961, when he was brought into my room for the interrogation, I looked up and was shocked to see before me a scared and wretched man. It was hard for me to believe that this man was Eichmann, the man who'd sent so many European Jews to their death."

What was the dynamic in the room like?

"We were police commanders, professional investigators. We had been given very specific instructions to treat him as we would have any other murder suspect. In fact, we'd been told never to raise our voice to him so that he couldn't complain in court that we had exerted excessive pressure on him, and he did not use claim this. The interrogation lasted for nine months.

"The interrogator who sat with Eichmann on an almost daily schedule was Commander Avner Less. When we needed to clarify something specific

about the area we were responsible for, we'd meet with Eichmann in the interrogation room. There was a microphone and everything was recorded. We asked questions and he answered. Two days later, a written transcription of what had been said was placed in front of him, and he would sign it. These papers were used as proof in court once the trial began."

According to Goldman-Gilad, Eichmann never took personal responsibility for anything.

"He consistently presented himself as a cog in the Nazi machine and put all the blame on others, pleading that he was just following orders from above," he recalls. "But we presented him with hundreds of documents with his signature on them that had been located in archives in Europe and the US. He had signed letters and directives that he would give to all of his emissaries in the countries that had been occupied by Germany, regarding the trans-

port of Jews to extermination camps. In order to deflect any personal responsibility for these actions, Eichmann claimed that he'd been merely following orders. We were able to prove, however, that he was the one who gave the orders himself. I spoke with him in German. His testimony was recorded in German. Of course, we had everything translated into Hebrew before we submitted the statements to the court."

Did this work take a toll on you emotionally?

"Yes, it was very hard, but we'd been instructed to keep control of ourselves at all times during the interrogation. We did so, even at the expense of our own mental health. Almost half of our interrogators, as well as a number of technicians working with us, were Holocaust survivors. One of the hardest moments for me was when I came upon a document that included orders to transport the Jews from the *Przemysl* ghetto to *Belzec*. From this doc-



Discussing the extension of Eichmann's arrest.

ument, I learned that on July 26, 1942, which also happens to be my birthday, my parents and little sister were sent to the *Belzec* extermination camp."

Goldman-Gilad interrogated Eichmann five times.

"I sat with him each time for an hour and a half or two hours," Goldman-Gilad recalls. "My main task in Bureau 06 was to uncover relevant documents that delineated his actions. I also met with Holocaust survivors so I could take down their testimonies, in preparation for calling them up as witnesses during the trial. This part of the job was also tremendously difficult. I would sit and listen to their stories, and then try to convince them to offer testimony in court. They would tell me, 'No one will believe me.'"

"And it's true. Back in those days, there were plenty of people who didn't believe the stories survivors told. There was one

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THROUGH THE EYES OF A 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL

On Sunday, July 24, 2022, Holocaust survivor Dr. Janina Altman (née Hescheles) passed away. Janina's life story is displayed in Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum in the chapter dealing with Żegota — the Council for Aid to Jews that was active in Nazi-occupied Poland. At the age of twelve, Janina wrote a diary while in hiding in *Krakow*.

Janina was born on January 2, 1931, in Lvov, Poland (now Ukraine), the only child of Emilia and Henryk Hescheles. Henryk was the chief editor of the Jewish newspa-



Janina and her parents in Lvov before the war.

per *Chevila (Moment)*, and Emilia was a Hebrew teacher and nurse. Janina wrote in her diary about the invasion of Lvov by the Germans in the summer of 1941:

"My father kissed me and said: 'Janio, you are already ten years old and you need to be independent. Do not rely on acquaintances. Always be brave.' He hugged me and turned to separate from me. I began to understand what was going on, and my mouth began to quiver. I was ready to burst into tears, but my father told me: 'If you truly love me, walk with courage and never cry; crying is humiliation in times of calamity as well as in times of happiness. Go home now, and leave me here.' I kissed my father for the last time and left... this is how we separated forever."

In a three-day pogrom at that time, some 4,000 Jews were murdered by the Ukrainians, including Henryk Hescheles.

Janina and her mother were imprisoned in the Lvov ghetto, where many of their relatives were murdered. On the eve of the ghetto's liquidation, Janina was separated from her mother. Emilia was deported to

the *Janowska* concentration camp. Janina managed to escape from the ghetto and made her way to *Janowska*, where she discovered that Emilia had committed suicide together with the rest of the medical team. Janina was now alone.

In *Janowska*, Janina wrote many poems, which she recited to the prisoners in her barracks. Among other works, she wrote the poem *Belzec*:

*What a horrible sight
A train car full of people
In the corner a number of bodies
Everyone standing naked
Their moans deafening the whirring of
the wheels
Only the one condemned to death un-
derstands
What the wheels say about him:
To Belzec! To Belzec! To Belzec!
To Death! To Death! To Death!
If you want to live...
Jump! Run! Run!
But be careful
Because a guard is also waiting for you.*

Janina's poems drew the attention in particular of another camp prisoner, the Jewish author Michal Borwicz, who became her friend. When Borwicz later escaped the camp with the help of Żegota, he demanded the escape of another group of prisoners, including Janina Hescheles. The group escaped with the assistance of Żegota's courier, Ziuta Rysinska.

In October 1943, Janina was transferred into the care of Miriam (Marianska) Hochberg, a Jew working for Żegota in *Krakow*. Marianska arranged her hiding place, and three weeks later brought her a grey notebook and told her to write. Marianska later wrote about this in her book *Witnesses: Life in Occupied Krakow*.

"We began vigorously searching for a hiding place for the young Janka Hescheles, who had escaped from *Janowska*. I contacted Wanda Janowska [later recognized as Righteous Among the Nations] about this, and she decided without hesitation to take this young protégée into her apartment. Here in her first shelter, Janka began writing her diary.... But Janka did not find peace in Wanda's home for long. One day, Wanda was warned that a Jew

who had Wanda's address listed on her documents had been discovered, and it was expected that Wanda's home would be searched at any moment. We had to immediately remove the false identity papers from the workshop and Janka Hescheles from the apartment."

Janina lived in several other hiding places until the fall of 1944, when Hochberg met Jadwiga Strzalecka, who had run an orphanage in Warsaw and, after the Polish Uprising, had moved with the children to *Poronin*, next to *Zakopane*. Hochberg wrote about the meeting between them in her memoir:

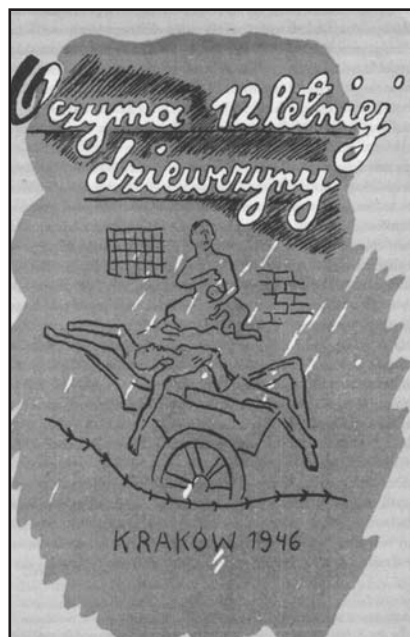
"Ten out of the forty children in her institution were Jewish. When I told her about Janka, she immediately said: 'Please bring her to us, I am sure she will feel comfortable amongst our children.' Her proposal was a blessing from Heaven, and Janka was given the opportunity to be freed from her nightmare for the last months of the war."

Janina Hescheles's diary was first published in Polish in 1946 by the Jewish Historical Commission in *Krakow* and was edited by Michal Borwicz. The three grey notebooks in which Janina wrote in large,

round, childish script were housed in Borwicz's personal archive, until he transferred them to the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum. Since then, the diary has been published in many languages. In 2016 it was finally released in Hebrew, translated by Janina herself, and in 2020 it was published in English as *My Lvov: Holocaust Memoir of a Twelve-Year-Old Girl*.

In 1950, Janina emigrated to Israel, and in 1953 she was accepted to study chemistry at the Technion in *Haifa*. A

decade later, she completed her doctorate in that field. She worked in research at the Technion, at the Weizmann Institute for Science, at the University of *Dusseldorf*, and in *Munich*, Germany. She married a physicist, Professor Kalman Altman, z"l, and they had two sons, Tzvika and Eitan. Among her many writings, she published a book about the White Rose underground movement: students and intellectuals in Germany who were active before and after Hitler came to power. May her memory be for a blessing.



The 1946 Polish publication of Janina's diary.

WHAT IT TOOK FOR STELLA LEVI TO TALK ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

There is something unique about the way cataclysms are preserved in oral histories. In his 1936 essay “The Storyteller,” Walter Benjamin draws a distinction between the printed novel and the oral tale, whereby experience is “passed from one mouth to the next.” The direct line of transmission is significant: The story you hear from a living witness embeds itself into the mechanisms of memory, as I’ve learned firsthand, like no other. And yet such a transmission poses certain challenging considerations. Is a human being defined by the worst, most tragic thing that happens in her life? Should it carry more importance than the periods that bracket it? What does it mean to be the person who shares this particular heirloom?

I have been haunted by these questions over the past seven years, after a chance encounter changed my life and, along with it, my understanding of the power and responsibility of memory. Late for a lecture one evening in the winter of 2015, I dropped into a chair next to an older, elegant woman who looked me over carefully before inquiring why I was in such a hurry.

I answered that my weekly French lesson had run long. She thought for a moment, then asked if I was interested in knowing how French served her in her life.

“Sure,” I answered.

“When I arrived in Auschwitz,” she said almost matter-of-factly, “they didn’t know what to do with us. What kind of Jews don’t speak Yiddish? We were Judeo-Spanish-speaking Sephardic Italian Jews from the island of Rhodes, I tried to explain. They asked us if we spoke German. No. Polish? No. French? ‘Yes,’ I said. ‘French, I speak.’

“Because we spoke French, at Auschwitz they put us with the French and Belgian women, who spoke French and Yiddish; a little German, too, enough so that they could translate and they could communicate. Since they understood what was going on, they managed to survive — and therefore so did we.”

This woman’s name was Stella Levi. The following morning, I received a call from a mutual friend who said that Stella was putting together a few thoughts about her youth in Rhodes and, as she was unsure of her written English, she wondered if I would be willing to help.

On that first of the 100 Saturdays that we would end up spending together, it didn’t take me very long to discover that Stella, now 99, has a memory that is incised with stories about the Juderia of

Rhodes, the neighborhood (never a ghetto) where she grew up, as had her parents and grandparents before her and their ancestors before them, in theory going all the way back to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. The last born and now last living of seven children in her family, she is the repository of stories that she heard from her grandmothers, parents and older siblings, so that her storytelling contains memories that stretch beyond her lifetime, back into the 19th century.

In the world of Stella’s childhood, old women healed the ailing with remedies and superstitions, and people rode in horse-drawn carriages, baked their dishes in a communal oven and bathed before each Shabbat at the Turkish baths. Although the Jews lived in relative peace with, if in separate neighborhoods from, their Turkish and Greek neighbors, in the Juderia life was traditional and inward-turning and was commanded by the Jewish calendar. Preparations for Passover alone could stretch to two weeks, given that everyone whitewashed their homes, inside and out, top to bottom.

In the early 1910s and ’20s, after Italy conquered and effectively colonized the island, modernity began to disrupt these old customs and habits.

This was particularly transformative for young people like Stella, who came of age in a milieu where they made friends with their Italian peers, went to the movies (Shirley Temple, the Marx Brothers), learned popular music (“Tonerai,” “Baci-ami Piccina”), read Freud and Proust and began to dream of wider possibilities in life — in Stella’s case, attending university in Italy.

I came to think of Stella as a modern-day Scheherazade who left me hanging, week to week, as she talked me through the story of her youth. She took me, eventually, to 1938, the year she and her fellow Jewish classmates were banished from school, an experience that made Stella feel, as she explained, like an animal. (“Animals don’t need to be educated, right?”) Yet, despite the story she had told

me when we were first seated next to each other, she initially refused to speak further about the nine months she spent in Auschwitz and half a dozen other concentration camps.

“I don’t want to be a storyteller of the *Shoah*, atrophied and with my ideas fixed and unevolving,” she said when I pressed her. “I don’t want to see myself as a victim.”

Stella and I spent months circling around this dilemma. What does it mean for the survivor to offer her story, when the fact of her survival classifies hers as a minority voice, the one that can narrate past, way past, the point where the voices of her parents, her uncles and aunts, her neighbors and friends were silenced? (This one bothered Stella a great deal.) Who was she to speak for, and about, this community and how it was extinguished?

I came to understand that Stella needed to ask herself these questions before she could tell me her story. Once she did, the inexorable chronology of her own life brought us to the moment when the Germans seized Rhodes from the Italians in the fall of 1943, and then deported the Jewish community, more than 1,700 people in all, in July of the following year.

Stella described to me the arduous, suffocating weeks spent traveling by boat and train to Auschwitz, where some 90 percent of her community, including her parents and other family members, were immediately murdered. She told me about the unrelenting fear (and surprising laughter, often at what she described as the Beckettian absurdity of the conditions in which they found themselves), along with the several critical instances of *suerte*, or luck, that allowed her and her sister Renée to survive. In the end, she shared her heirloom, a very bitter one indeed.

“The storyteller finds his material in experience: his own or what he has learned secondhand,” Mr. Benjamin wrote. “And the stories he tells, in turn, become experience for his audience.” In other words, we are what we hear? I know I am now, and I know that I’m now determined to tell Stella’s story to everyone who will listen.

BY MICHAEL FRANK,
The New York Times



Stella Levi. Portrait by Maira Kalman.

A LEGACY OF REMEMBRANCE: HONORING LEONARD AND BETH WILF

For Leonard and Beth Wilf, remembrance is woven into the fabric of their lives. The son of Holocaust survivors, Harry and Judith Wilf, ז"ל, Lenny was born two years after World War II in *Augsburg*, Germany, and emigrated to the U.S. at the age of eight. His parents placed the utmost importance on Holocaust education so that history would never be forgotten nor repeated.



Leonard and Beth Wilf.

The Wilf family's work with Yad Vashem began with the Museum's founding in Israel in 1953, and subsequently with the inception of the American Society in the early 1980s. Lenny's family has worked closely with several leaders throughout history, including the late chair of ASYV, Eli Zborowski, ז"ל, to spearhead the founding of both organizations and drive significant growth in reach and awareness. Lenny and Beth started their active involvement in ASYV in 2002 when he became head of the endowment fund. After both of his parents passed away, he placed even more importance on continuing their legacy. In 2012, Lenny became chairman of ASYV, a position in which he served with grace and generosity until 2021.

During Lenny's tenure and with Beth's support, ASYV's development initiatives raised over \$175 million dollars, and with average annual giving growing over 67%, the endowment grew to what it is today. As an organization, ASYV saw notable progress, with team enhancements such as the strategic hire of a marketing and communications director as well as the opening of satellite offices in Florida and Los Angeles. From a programming perspective, Lenny and Beth played a key role in broadening ASYV's educational offerings and reinvigorating its Young Leadership program. In addition to raising the stature of Yad Vashem and ASYV, Lenny led several missions abroad for them, which began in 2016 and continued bien-

nially under his tenure. Lenny credits his parents' and Eli's guidance for his enduring passion to serve — from remembrance and education to many other charitable endeavors. In turn, his contributions have inspired countless individuals to create their own impact on their communities and organizations. Beyond ASYV, Lenny's commitment to faith-focused history, education and com-

munity reflects in his tenure with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. He also spearheaded the construction of the MetroWest Campus of UJA-Federation in East Hanover, New Jersey, which opened in 1996. Lenny and Beth reside in Palm Beach, Florida. Their children and grandchildren all helped to plan this event and are very proud of their accomplishments and legacy.

The Power of One

HONORING
LEONARD & BETH WILF

MASTER OF CEREMONIES
WOLF BLITZER
CNN ANCHOR

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2022 | 6:00 PM EDT
THE PIERRE
2 EAST 61ST STREET | NEW YORK CITY

LIVE STREAMED NATIONALLY
7:15PM EDT/ 4:15PM PDT

SUGGESTED MINIMUM GIFT TO ATTEND IN PERSON: \$5,000**
(ASYV Recognizes a Donor's Total Annual Commitment)

TICKET: \$1,000 PER PERSON

**Includes a listing on the event website,
in the virtual tribute journal and printed program at the Gala.
Young Leadership Associates under 40 are invited to join
and be listed at half the noted amounts.

To register for the gala online go to
www.yadvashemusa.org/2022gala

ISRAEL, ARGENTINA SIGN AGREEMENT TO SHARE HOLOCAUST ARCHIVES

Argentina has agreed to share archival records about Jews who fled the Holocaust to the country in a new agreement signed between Yad Vashem and the Archivo General de la Nación (General Archive of the Nation) in Buenos Aires.

In addition, the countries have agreed to increase Holocaust-education programs in the Latin American country.



Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan.

“Holocaust remembrance, education and research are the keys to fighting intolerance, hatred and anti-Semitism,” said Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan, who signed the agreements on behalf of Israel. “Argentina took an additional step in the right direction to bringing meaningful and historically accurate knowledge about the Holocaust to its youth and future generations, as well as to allow for the expansion of our repositories of documentation of the events of this dark chapter of our not-so-distant past.”

He added that “with the opening of Argentinian National Archives, Yad Vashem will be able to delve deeper into the multifaceted elements — and meanings — of the Holocaust.”

The agreement was signed in the presence of Argentinian Interior Minister Eduardo de Pedro.

Yad Vashem was established in 1953, less than a decade after the conclusion of World War II and the Holocaust. Since then, it has been gathering relevant archival documentation from around the world and bringing it to the Mount of Remembrance as the bases for all of its commemorative and educational efforts.

Today, the museum houses more than 222 million pages of Holocaust-related documentation, which over the years has been made available to researchers and the public at its Jerusalem campus and online.

According to the cooperation agreement, which JNS reviewed, the Argentinian

General Archive will provide access for Yad Vashem representatives to the research tools and archival materials, as well as allow full-text copying of related documents. Yad Vashem may place digital copies of the reproduced documents in its own archive and can also open them up to the public for personal, educational or research purposes.

“It is our unwavering mission at Yad Vashem to gather all possible information relating to the Holocaust,” Dayan said after signing the agreement. “The archival documentation we collect is the basis for our multidisciplinary activities and enhances Yad Vashem’s mission to connect the pieces of the puzzle of the Holocaust in order to transmit its messages for all humanity.”

Yad Vashem Archives director Masha Pollack Rosenberg told JNS that the keys to uncovering the history of the Holocaust are hidden within archives scattered around the world.

“The Holocaust is one giant puzzle consisting of pieces of various sizes and significance,” she said. “Each individual, community and society have their own stories to tell and pictures to paint.”

“Yad Vashem is here not only to put the pieces of the puzzle back together, but also to see how each of the stories and pictures interact within the larger framework of European and North African Jewry and the Holocaust,” she continued. “We never know what piece of the puzzle might interlink with another seemingly unrelated element in the history of the *Shoah*, deepening our greater understanding of the events of 80 years ago. These are the endless possibilities that exist when we begin to investigate new archives.”

The Argentinian National Archive is particularly interesting despite the Holocaust having taken place in Europe, thousands of miles away from Argentina, according to Rosenberg. She said there were ties connecting the country to the Holocaust both on the sides of the victims and the perpetrators.

“While during the war Argentina remained neutral with ties on both sides of the hostilities, after the war, many Nazis escaped Europe and sought refuge [there],” she explained. “Similarly, on the victims’ side, the Jewish community in Argentina — many of whom were expats from Europe — had families directly affected by the events of the Holocaust. In

addition, a sizable group of Holocaust survivors emigrated to South America, and specifically Argentina, after the war, seeking to rebuild their lives.”

In addition to the agreement about the archives, in a meeting with Argentine Education Minister Jaime Perczyk, Dayan signed the first-ever agreement between Yad Vashem and the Argentinian Ministry of Education, pledging to strengthen efforts to promote education and commemoration of the Holocaust in Argentina.



Headquarters of the Archivo General de la Nación (General Archive of the Nation).

“Holocaust education is key to our fight against intolerance and the baseless hatred of anti-Semitism,” said Dayan. “Argentina took an additional step in the right direction to bringing meaningful and historically accurate knowledge regarding this dark chapter of our not-so-distant past to the youth of today and generations to come.”

The agreement is specifically between Yad Vashem and Argentina’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology.

It includes four initiatives: the coordination of professional and accredited educational activities for instructors both in formal and informal educational settings in Israel and Argentina; optimization of the use of Yad Vashem’s various resources, including the archives, museums, exhibitions and pedagogical framework for educational activities; facilitation of discussions between Argentine and Israeli teachers over pedagogical practices; and the planning and

(Continued on page 13)

POEMS BORN IN *BERGEN-BELSEN*

Poems Born in Bergen-Belsen.
By Menachem Z. Rosensaft. Kelsay Books: American Fork, Utah, 2021. 118 pp. \$18.50 softcover.

“Time heals all wounds” is a very popular saying. But does it? True, time heals a scrape. It heals a cut. But when a person loses an arm or a leg? No, that doesn’t really ever heal. A person just learns to live with it (or without it), “making do.” And psychic wounds? Ironically, the kind of wounds people don’t see? With the passing of time, the gravity of the loss in that area frequently only grows, alongside a growing understanding of the precious nature of life so easily extinguished.

Many books have been written about those who died in the Holocaust — where they died, how they died, who exactly was responsible for their deaths. Were they shot? Were they transported to gas chambers? Many books have also been written by and about the immediate survivors, with an increasing number being written by those in the Second Generation and the Third. Interestingly, what we immediately discover in that last is that the Holocaust was a traumatic event of such unimaginable proportions that its evil has impacted the descendants of those who actually experienced it. And the passage of time . . . that has only allowed descendants to more fully realize the unprecedented inhumanity perpetrated on relatives and dear ones lost to them forever.

For example, thoughtful and poignant, Menachem Z. Rosensaft, a child of Holocaust survivors, now a grandfather, pres-

ents us with his volume entitled *Poems Born in Bergen-Belsen*. Particularly moving are his poems about innocent Jewish children — become “ghost children” — murdered by the Nazis. Such poems include “Meditation on a Ghost Child,” “A Refusal to Forgive the Death, by Gas, of a Child in *Birkenau*,” “oh yes, I too refuse to mourn,” “They Wait,” and “Ne’ilah.” Why does Rosensaft spend so much time writing of them? Many would agree that there is no greater crime than the murder of a child. (Even among criminals, child-murderers are held in especial contempt!) That alone earns the topic its formidable place. Another reason, sadly, is the fact that Benjamin, a five-and-a-half - year-old little boy who would have been Rosensaft’s older brother, was sent to the gas chamber by the Nazis. Thus, Rosensaft, thinking of a brother murdered years ago, now writes:

*once upon a time
my brother
used to laugh
used to play
used to sing
used to have tomorrows
but that was before*

Then, in a later piece, surely reflecting on events he was lucky enough to experience in his own life, Rosensaft simply lists all that his brother never did — love, life in a community, and so very much more — all

stolen when a life is taken, all of it gone, never to be returned.

Other poems here, like “At *Belsen*,” “Auschwitz-Birkenau, January 27, 2015,” “*Sosnowiec* Visited,” and “two broken candles,” sensitively tell what it’s like to return to places where genocide occurred. Second-generation survivors frequently feel that need — only to realize why their parents often never wanted to see those places again! Why witness the emptiness? And, worse still, why meet those who could easily have collaborated with the killers, or even the children of those who did so? All will claim their innocence . . . but can you believe it? Is there any way to prove it?

Finally, throughout his work, as in his “Psalm 13, Post-Auschwitz,” Rosensaft wonders where God was in all this. What kind of God would allow all that happened during the Holocaust to happen? How could He turn away from the innocent, ignoring their pain and sorrow? How? Why? To what purpose?

Needless to say, there is much here for survivors, and especially descendants of survivors, to relate to. Time has given us all the opportunity to think . . . and miss relatives; indeed, to miss a whole world that might have been . . .

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



AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE EICHMANN TRIAL

(Continued from page 6)
woman, Rivka Yosselevska, who was shot with her whole family by the SS. But Rivka had only been wounded, and managed to climb out of the pit. She found her way, naked, to a farmer who took pity on her and gave her shelter. This is a famous story that is still taught in Israeli schools.”

The Eichmann trial was conducted under a veil of secrecy.

“We were only allowed to go home once a week, for Shabbat. We were forbidden from saying where we’d been or where the interrogation was taking place. And in fact, no information was leaked during that period,” recalls Goldman-Gilad.

Was it difficult having to keep everything inside?

“Yes, it was extremely hard. I wasn’t even allowed to tell my wife or kids anything. When the trial itself began, Gideon Hausner,

the lead prosecutor, asked me to be his personal assistant during the trial. I sat at the table next to Hausner throughout the entire trial. Sitting through the trial was no less difficult than the work I’d carried out in Bureau 06. When survivors like Rivka Yosselevska took the stand and told their stories, I felt like I was experiencing the Holocaust right along with them. It’s no surprise that I suffered a heart attack a few years later.”

How did you feel when you heard the verdict?

“We, the investigating officers, weren’t sure that Eichmann would receive the death penalty. We were sure that he deserved it, but we weren’t sure the judges would sentence him to death. There is no way for us as humans to avenge what the Jewish people suffered. I am sure that only God can take revenge for what they did to us. We are not capable.

“I was also one of the two police officers who were present at Eichmann’s hanging, which took place on May 31, 1962. Even at that moment, I didn’t feel like this was an act of revenge. Maybe this could be considered justice for one person, but he couldn’t be hanged six million times. The true revenge is my five children and my 12 grandchildren.”

After the Eichmann trial ended, Goldman-Gilad continued working for the Israel Police for another two years. “Afterwards, I was sent by the Jewish Agency to work in South America, and subsequently, I served in a number of civil service roles.”

Goldman-Gilad says that he was very moved when the book was finally published. He was also among the people who scattered Eichmann’s ashes at sea. As he did so, he said the following words out loud: “So may perish all your enemies, Israel.”

THE YAD VASHEM STORY, CHAPTER 1: MEMORIALIZING THE HOLOCAUST — BEFORE IT HAD ENDED

August marks 80 years since the idea of Yad Vashem — the World Holocaust Remembrance Center — was proposed.

The establishment of an institution or site to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust was formulated back in the darkest days of World War II, in 1942, while the campaign of extermination was still in progress. Many of the Jews, while living in the ghettos or in hiding, wrote diaries and



Mordechai Shenhavi c.1920.

letters, created artworks and film clips, collected documentation in secret archives, and buried documents, testimonies and artifacts in the ground. Even in the forests and concentration camps, the Jews felt the need to collect and document, in order to ensure that the memories and testimonies of them standing up to the Nazis and their collaborators in body and spirit would remain, and that one day the world would give an account for the destruction of the Jewish people. As Rabbi Yitzhak Meir Levin, a member of Agudath Israel, later said in the debate in the Knesset on the legislation of the Yad Vashem Law:

"The day will come and the reckoning will be demanded from all humanity, from all the nations of the world: 'Where were you when a large part of an ancient people, the chosen nation, was destroyed, in a way that has no precedent in the history of the world?'"

Israel's Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, as Yad Vashem was originally coined, was the vision of one man, Mordechai Shenhavi. The idea that

Shenhavi — a Zionist activist immigrant to Eretz Israel from Odessa, who was living on Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'Emek — came up with was not immediately accepted, because the Yishuv (the renewed Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel) was not yet able to grasp the news about the catastrophe of the Holocaust, or digest the dimensions of the loss of its brothers and sisters in Europe. Only after the WWII ended, at the same time as the Yishuv's struggle for its independence, did Shenhavi resubmit his proposal to the national institutions, and as a result of his tireless activity, the idea of establishing Yad Vashem as a state authority gradually took shape. In August 1942, while he was visiting Kibbutz Beit Alfa, Shenhavi wrote on a sheet of stationery the first notes about the future site: "The idea of commemorating all the losses and the disaster of the Jewish people in light of the Nazi persecutions and the war."

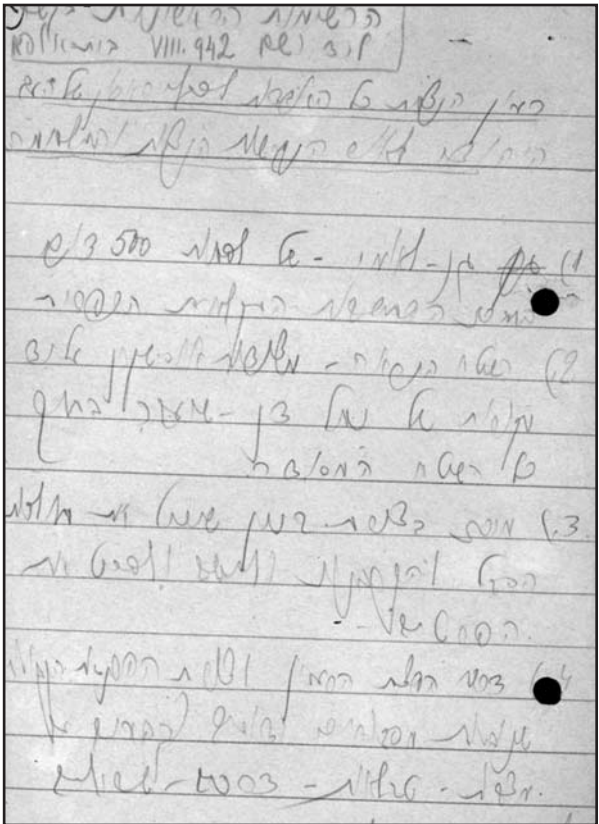
A month later, in September 1942, Shenhavi placed on the desk of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) Board of Directors a plan to declare a "people's enterprise," whose purpose was to "commemorate the Holocaust of the Diaspora, as well as those Jews who fought in the Allied armies" — thus establishing a link between the Holocaust and heroism. The enterprise would strengthen the centrality of the Yishuv, and serve as a tool to expand its relationship with Diaspora Jewry:

"In the Land of Israel that is being built up, the memorial will be erected as a sign and a warning to us and to the peoples outside of us; a witness to the sufferings and bravery of our sanctified brethren; evidence of the fate of a nation without a homeland; a memorial to the communities of Israel that were destroyed to the core."

In the first memorandum Shenhavi sent to the JNF as early as September 10, 1942, he proposed to launch a campaign to collect donations for the construction of a memorial site. According to his plan, this site was to include two pavilions: "The Diaspora Pavilion" and "The Pavilion for the Jewish Soldier." Shenhavi believed that he would be able to raise funds for this purpose, and made sure to point out that some of the donations would be directed to the purchase of land and the rescue of Holocaust orphans. He believed that this action would also be an important factor in the education of the Jewish youth in the United States and in strengthening their at-

tachment to their people. However, owing to the hostilities both at home and abroad, his appeal remained only an idea at this stage.

On April 19, 1944, the first anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, Shenhavi renewed his attempts to initiate a commemorative site. He even chose a name for the institution: "Yad Vashem — a monument to the murdered." The name had actually been suggested to Shenhavi by the JNF Religious Department Director Rabbi Moshe Burstein back at the end of 1942, and is taken from the book of Isaiah:



The draft proposal for Yad Vashem, written by Mordechai Shenhavi in August 1942.

"And to them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name (a 'Yad Vashem') ... that shall not be cut off."

In the name, the physical and spiritual dimensions of the future memorial were combined: the site to be established would be the "Yad" — the physical place where the memorials and documentation would reside — and the "Shem" — the spiritual commemoration through restoring the names of those who were murdered. The memorial was therefore intended to preserve and commemorate the memories of the Jewish victims and communities that were deliberately wiped out by Nazi Germany.

BY LEAH GOLDSTEIN

Read chapter 2 on page 14

DEPORTATIONS OF JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

(Continued from page 5)
evacuation of the *Drancy* concentration and transit camp near the French capital by the Germans prior to their retreat from France, a group of 51 Jews was taken out of *Drancy*. They were Jewish under-



Mendel Grossman (right) photographing the deportation of Jews from the *Lodz* ghetto, summer 1944.

ground members who had been caught by the Germans in April and July 1944: members of L'Armée Juive (AJ), the Jewish Communist underground, the Dutch-Jewish Underground Hechalutz and others. The Germans gathered them clandestinely, for fear that their comrades would try and rescue them, and attached them to a German evacuation train bound for *Buchenwald*.

Alfred ("Zippi") Frenkel, a member of Hechalutz, was on the train. "The French resistance wanted to prevent the train's departure, and they bombed the railway tracks," he related. "From the first days, we considered escaping from the train,

and made arrangements after we figured out how it could be done. Ours was the last train car. The police were in the car in front of us.... We opened one side of the rear section of the car, and prepared to jump out in order. We held a lottery. I got number 23; somebody jumped out every five minutes until we reached number 19." Unfortunately, the escape was halted because the railway tracks had been bombed and the train came to a standstill. "Zippi" survived *Buchenwald* and other camps, and emigrated to Israel.

The exhibition also features the story of the last transport from the *Terezin* ghetto to Auschwitz, on October 28, 1944. Among the deportees was Kurt Geron, one of the most successful artists in Germany in the interwar period. He had starred in and directed dozens of films, plays and cabaret performances. On April 1, 1933, the day of the national boycott of German Jewry, Geron and his Jewish colleagues were thrown out of the UFA cinema studio in Berlin. Geron was in the middle of directing a film. Before the day's shooting began, the production manager gathered the workers and told the Jews to leave the studio. Geron left in tears, his back visibly shaking. The same month, he moved to Paris. Some two years later, he went to Vienna and then to the Netherlands. He settled in Amsterdam, where he continued to direct films. Even after the German occu-

pation of the country, he continued to work in his field. In September 1943, he was arrested, and sent with his wife Olga to the *Westerbork* concentration and transit



Kurt Herald Isenstein (1898-1980): portrait of Kurt Geron, 1929.

camp in northeastern Netherlands, where he continued his theatrical-cabaret activities. In October 1944, he was deported to his death at Auschwitz.

Most of the deportees had been murdered by the end of the war. Few survived against all odds and managed to return to life in the shadow of loss and harrowing memories. By revealing their stories, sharing them and disseminating them online, we remember them as people, each unique in his or her own way. No longer anonymous, no more a face in the crowd, but people each with a name, identity and life story.

BY YONA KOBO

ISRAEL, ARGENTINA SIGN AGREEMENT TO SHARE HOLOCAUST ARCHIVES

(Continued from page 10)
carrying out of preparatory annual and multiannual follow-up programming.

"I am pleased that ... relations between Israel and Argentina have reached a very high level," said Israeli Ambassador to Argentina Galit Ronen.

The agreements were signed as part of a week-long visit made by Dayan and other leaders working to fight anti-Semitism, including U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism Deborah Lipstadt.

Dayan also met with Argentinian President Alberto Fernández.

"In my discussion with the president, I expressed our deep appreciation for his support that has led to the signing of two important agreements," said Dayan.

He noted that he and Fernández talked about the rise of hate speech and anti-Semitism around the world.

"I also took this opportunity to raise the issue of the terror attack on the headquarters of the AMIA [Argentine Jewish Mutual

Association] in Buenos Aires 28 years ago, and the fact that despite the deaths of 85 victims, justice has not yet been served, with no one prosecuted to date," said Dayan. "President Fernández expressed great frustration at this issue."

Dayan was born in Argentina and emigrated to Israel as a young boy. He spent Shabbat with the Argentinian community before holding official meetings.

BY BY MAAYAN HOFFMAN, JNS

THE YAD VASHEM STORY, CHAPTER 2: ESTABLISHING YAD VASHEM IN THE JEWISH HOMELAND

At the end of World War II, when the extent of the mass murders that were the lot of the Jews in Europe and North Africa (and could have been that of the Yishuv in the Land of Israel) was revealed, Mordechai Shenhavi once again raised the idea of a national institution to commemorate the Holocaust in Israel.

On May 25, 1945, Shenhavi published his proposal for the "Yad Vashem Memorial for Destroyed Diaspora Jewry" in the *Devar* newspaper.

"This eternal memorial that the Jewish people will establish in Eretz Israel will serve as a teacher and a guide for future generations; a sign and a warning for us; and a moral imperative for the world. It will preserve the memory of every single victim and commemorate everything that befell us during the Second World War."



Sara Friedlander.

The topic was discussed at a joint meeting of the Jewish National Council (Va'ad Le'umi) and the National Institutions in June 1945. The meeting recommended the adoption of Shenhavi's proposal, including the establishment of a center in Jerusalem to consist of an eternal light for the victims; a registry of their names; a memorial for the destroyed Jewish communities; a monument for the fighters of the ghettos; a memorial tower in honor of all the Jewish fighters against the Nazis; a permanent exhibit on the concentration and extermination camps; and a tribute to the "Righteous Among the Nations." The proposal also recommended the planting of memorial forests and the building of educational institutions for the children of the survivors. "It [Yad Vashem] will elevate the memory of the martyrs in order to forge a continual connection between the Jewish people and

their destiny."

The proposal was discussed and approved at the meeting of the Zionist Executive Committee held in London in August 1945, where representatives of the Yishuv met for the first time with some of the survivors. The exact location of the planned site was not yet determined, and many varied proposals were made. Compared to the multitude of other ideas, the area near Jerusalem's western Givat Shaul neighborhood was deemed a suitable place in all respects: elevation, proximity to the city and easy access.

On May 18, 1946, the "Yad Vashem Enterprise" opened, still without a permanent source of funding, in a three-room apartment at 27 King George Street in Jerusalem, concentrating its efforts on documentation collected by Holocaust survivors and brought to Israel, as well as books donated or sent from Europe. The director of the archives and finances was Dr. Sara Friedlander, a survivor of the Kastner train from Hungary. Friedlander had been involved in documenting the Holocaust period as early as 1941, when she managed the Keren Hayesod branch in Hungary, and later in the *Bergen-Belsen* concentration camp, when she regularly recorded the minutes of the meetings of the Zionist activists in the camp as well as the names of the Jewish prisoners. In her work for Yad Vashem, Friedlander laid the foundation for the archive, participated in all the first managerial meetings of the institution, and organized the first Holocaust Research Conference on June 13–14, 1947.

The first plenary session of Yad Vashem had taken place just two weeks earlier, on June 1, 1947 in Jerusalem, with Chaim Weizmann elected president of the enterprise. Weizmann did not attend the meeting, but sent a congratulatory note:

"Six million of our people were led to slaughter," he wrote. "Neither a grave nor a tombstone remains of them, but their memory lives on in the hearts of each of us — the people who are strong will never forget them."

The outbreak of the fighting for Israel's independence slowed down Shenhavi's pursuit to advance the establishment of Yad Vashem, but did not stop it. He strove to increase the number of organizations and institutions that would be mobilized to

establish Yad Vashem, and in November and December 1947, despite the hostilities, he sent letters to all the immigrant organizations in Israel, including to the organizations of immigrants from Turkey and Libya and to the Association of North African Immigrants, and proposed meetings to present to them the "essence of the enterprise, the methods of its execution, and the form of participation of your compatriots in it." At the same time, he was able to convince the Hebrew Teachers' Union in the Land of Israel to send a special circular to school principals calling for the students to register the family members who were murdered during the Holocaust. He later turned to all the book publishers in Israel with a request that they come up with "suitable publications" for Yad Vashem.



The first Conference on Holocaust Research held at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, June 1947.

On the fifth anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising a memorial assembly was held at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. The collection of documentation continued despite the battles and the siege of Jerusalem. All those involved understood the urgency of their work, and collections brought to Israel from the displaced persons camps were received.

The fledgling institution contributed its part to the struggle for Israel's independence, and most of its employees were recruited. In addition to her work at Yad Vashem, Sara Friedlander volunteered in the medical service and spent many hours at the observation post in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem. At noon on Saturday, May 29, 1948, Friedlander was injured by a shell while tending to the

(Continued on page 15)

ANTI-SEMITISM ON THE DARK WEB

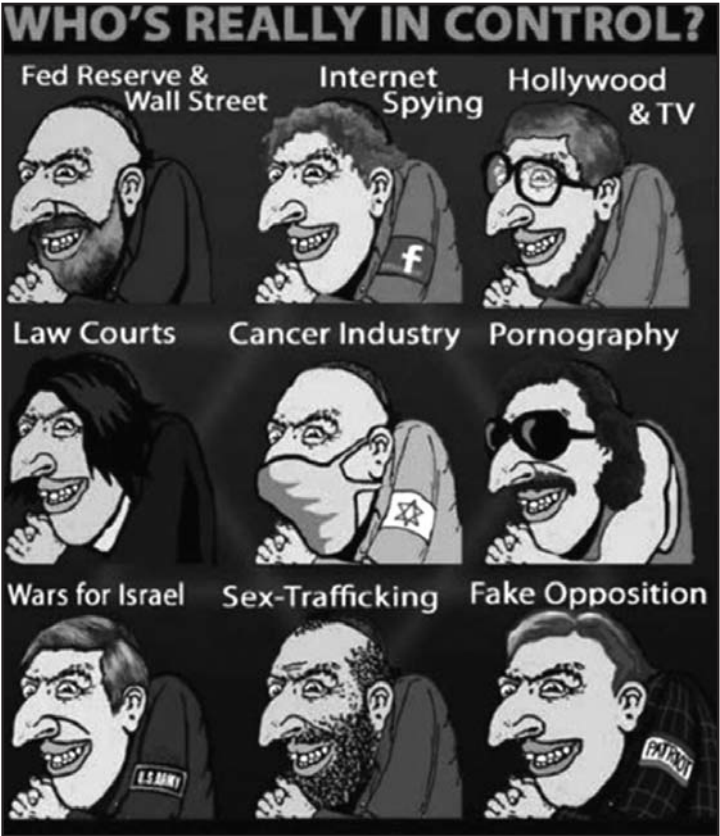
During a recent three-month fellowship at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research, Dr. Lev Topor focused on the topic of online Holocaust denial on anonymous platforms such as the dark web — online content that isn't indexed by search engines and that requires special software or authorization to access.

Dr. Lev Topor is an academic researcher who focuses on the study of anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, Holocaust denial and cybersecurity. His doctoral research topic was anti-Semitic trends in the British Labour Party; he then co-authored *Why Do People Discriminate Against Jews?* More recently, Dr. Topor has combined his research topics to study online anti-Semitism, for which he has won several awards, including the annual Robert Wistrich [ז"ל] Award from the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

"Focusing on Holocaust denial on the dark web is a natural extension of my ongoing research," says Dr. Topor. "Since I deal with cyber-related issues outside academia, I have encountered significant amounts of mis/disinformation about the Holocaust online. I want to expose this phenomenon, and present it to the research community as well as the general public."

Dr. Topor raises several interesting in-

sights from this line of study. First, Holocaust denial is very similar in nature to mis/disinformation, or "fake news," online.



Indeed, he claims, the same tactics are used to disseminate anti-Semitic propaganda as to spread fake news. Second, while Holocaust denial originates mostly in anti-Semitic or neo-Nazi circles, it is frequently espoused by nonextremists — members of the public who consume pseudo-scientific and pseudo-authentic in-

formation from the dark web. "This information is perceived by many as a 'red pill' [a gateway to the truth] simply because it was published or leaked on the dark web, and so they choose to believe it over reliable academic research," explains Dr. Topor. "Even if they do not blame Jews or deny the Holocaust, they still believe distorted information that, generally and over time, will downgrade the scale and extent of the Holocaust."

With all this in mind, Dr. Topor stresses that "Holocaust education, even from a young age, is crucial. Once a person is more aware and educated about the topic, they will be less likely to believe mis/disinformation about the Holocaust spread by anti-Semites and neo-Nazis."

Dr. Topor suggests that his research could even enhance studies of anti-Semitism, racism and genocide. "I can see how my investigations may be further developed through psychological study," he concludes. "This could also contribute to the general study of mis/disinformation about minority groups that suffer from hate — mainly Jews, but also others."

BY LEAH GOLDSTEIN

THE YAD VASHEM STORY, CHAPTER 2

(Continued from page 14)

wounded at the post, and died a short time later. "A woman of social, moral and intellectual stature," Haim Gavrihu, secretary of Yad Vashem's documentation department, eulogized her, and said that she had planned to write "a book of national remembrance." In October of that year, owing to the security situation, the Jerusalem offices were temporarily closed and activities moved to the Tel Aviv branch at 42 Chen Boulevard.

In 1950, five years after the end of World War II and a year after the signing of the armistice agreements with the Arab states (July 1949), Mordechai Shenhavi resumed his activities to establish Yad Vashem, this time with the assistance of the Israeli government. "When the State of Israel was established, the question that haunted me was: what expression would be given to the memorial enterprise after we gained independence?" Shenhavi said in an interview with *Kol Israel*. He submitted his plan to the Israeli government and asked to receive the area of land in the western extension of Mount Herzl — to be divided between Yad

Vashem and a military cemetery.

At the beginning of January 1952, Shenhavi finished preparing a draft proposal for the "Yad Vashem Law." The government approved the Yad Vashem bill in March 1953, and on May 18, the proposal was brought to the Knesset and unanimously approved in the first reading.

The vote ended emotionally, as all members of the plenary stood for a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.



The bill passed the third reading and was accepted into law on August 19, 1953.

The Yad Vashem Law regulated the activities of the young institution, and turned it into a state body. After a long debate about whether to link the Holocaust to the reestablishment of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, it was decided that Yad Vashem would deal only with the Holocaust and the destruction of the Jewish communities, and not with the rebuilding of the Jewish homeland. The Law establishes the foundation of an authority whose mission is to perpetuate the memory of the six million Jews who were murdered by the

Nazis and their helpers; the Jewish communities and institutions that were lost forever; the Jewish fighters who fought in the ranks of the Allied armies; the ghetto and underground fighters and the partisans in the forests; and the Righteous Among the Nations of the world — those virtuous non-Jewish individuals who saved Jews for no reward and in doing so risked their lives and those of their families.

Yad Vashem was therefore intended to engage in the commemoration not only of murder and victims, but also of resistance and in the victory of the Jewish spirit. The Yad Vashem Law also designated for the institution the role of establishing memorials; collecting testimonies about the Holocaust and heroism; researching and publishing them; and instilling in future generations the meanings of the Holocaust. By virtue of the law, Yad Vashem was also authorized to grant honorary citizenship to the victims, and to represent the State of Israel in national and international events to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust.

BY LEAH GOLDSTEIN



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:

- Bequest by will
- Making ASYV/Yad Vashem a beneficiary of a Charitable Remainder Trust or Charitable Gift Annuity
- Donating a paid-up life insurance policy
- Contributing the proceeds of an IRA or retirement plan

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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