

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR YAD VASHEM

# MARTYRDOM & RESISTANCE



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ASYV Executive Director, Stanley Stone, Co-Chair of ASYV's Young Leadership Associates, Jordana Urman, Holocaust survivor Alfred Strauss, ASYV Executive Committee member and host of the evening David Halpern, ASYV Co-Chairs Adina Burian and Mark Moskowitz, Tristate Chair Loren Weiss

## Kristallnacht Commemoration

### ASYV Commemorates Kristallnacht

**On Wednesday evening, November 8,** leaders and major donors of the American Society for Yad Vashem (ASYV) gathered together in New York City for a special Kristallnacht Commemoration. Graciously hosted by Sharon and David Halpern in midtown Manhattan, the group came together to hear a moving presentation from Alfred Strauss, an eyewitness to Kristallnacht.

Loren Weiss, chairman of ASYV's Tristate Region, welcomed everyone and explained that while planning the Kristallnacht Commemoration program had begun months earlier, the tragic events of October 7 and its aftermath had changed our world and added a greater sense of urgency and import to the gathering that evening. Said Weiss, "Our role in combating antisemitism and safeguarding the Jewish people is evolving and will play a vital role in the years ahead."

David Halpern, ASYV Executive Committee member and host of the evening, spoke passionately about the critical role that the American Society for Yad Vashem plays at a time like this. He spoke of the urgent need for educational programming, stating that education is the answer to antisemitism. David eloquently delivered a charge to everyone in the room that evening: "Tonight let us learn. Tomorrow let us teach."

Guests were then able to hear testimony from Kristallnacht eyewitness and Holocaust survivor, Alfred Strauss. Alfred was a child growing up in Hunfeld, Germany, and with the rise of Nazism, his parents sent him and his two sisters on the Kindertransport to Holland in March of 1939. In 1943, Alfred was arrested by the Nazis and was able to escape and go into hiding until liberation in September 1944.

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Alfred was reunited with his parents and one sister in Sweden, and later emigrated to the U.S.

Immediately following Alfred’s testimony, Jordana Urman, Co-Chair of ASYV’s Young Leadership Associates, engaged in a brief conversation with him. Jordana posed the question to Alfred that we often hear asked of Holocaust survivors, “How did you find the strength to continue?” Alfred answered, “We had no choice.” Added Jordana, “Sometimes, you just have to persevere through the darkest times.”

Jordana and Alfred spent time discussing what lessons can be learned and transmitted to the next generation from both the Shoah, and in light of recent events, tragedies like that of

October 7. Both agreed that we must transmit strength and fortitude. While some may try to put these events into the background, it is our obligation to educate the next generation and the ones after that. We can never be silent.

Loren Weiss closed the program with a reminder of one of the poignant passages that we recite every year in the Passover Hagaddah: “...for not just one enemy has stood against us to wipe us out, but in every generation, there have been those who have stood against us to wipe us out.” That sadly is the narrative of our people, and programs like these remind us that we need to stand together, in strength and with courage, in the face of this reality.



## ASYV PRESENTS AT IBM'S WEEK OF IMPACT



YLA co-chairs, Sophie Krakowski and Jordana Urman, Holocaust survivor Toby Levy, IBM consultant, Rachel Liebergall

**On Wednesday, October 18,** the American Society for Yad Vashem partnered with IBM for their Week of Impact. The program was led by IBM consultant Rachel Liebergall, YLA co-chairs, Sophie Krakowski and Jordana Urman, and Holocaust Survivor Toby Levy.

More than 150 joined virtually and in person to hear Toby's story of survival.

The program began with a welcome from Rachel who shared that IBM employees bring a drive for change and will always come together against hate and injustice to create a better community. Marc Hayem, Business Transformation Services Leader at IBM, expressed that all those who have the opportunity to visit Yad Vashem must. He thoughtfully quoted Deuteronomy 30:19, "...I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life..." and thanked Toby for being with IBM to share her story and celebrate life.

As leaders of YLA, Sophie and Jordana both spoke about the privilege to hear firsthand testimonies and noted the significance and impact of these stories in days that immediately followed October 7, 2023. "As the present situation in Israel unfolds, we struggle to find a way to process it against the backdrop of the work we do in Holocaust remembrance and education," said Sophie. "There is so much to be learned from studying the Holocaust in order to raise awareness of the conditions in which hatred grows."

When introducing Toby, Jordana expressed relief that Toby's story highlights the goodness of people. "I think as we look at the situation that's going on in the world, we can all use a little bit of goodness. And while Toby's story also highlights the barbarity, and the atrocities, and fear that human beings can feel, it highlights the absolute goodness that people are capable of as well."

Toby Levy, a Holocaust survivor, shared her powerful story. She was saved by a mother, Stephanie, and son, Tajik, who allowed her family to hide in their barn. When Stephanie became afraid that she would be caught hiding a Jewish family, her 16-year-old son Tajik suggested that he personally would help protect Toby and her family. "Maybe we can save them," she recalled he had said to his mother. "A 16-year-old boy - he didn't hate me."

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IBM Business Transformation Services Leader, Marc Hayem



Toby continued her story recounting that her father told her, "Someone has to survive to tell the story, so maybe G-d chose you." She believes she is a miracle.

When asked about antisemitism today, she stated without pause, "...it's brewing, it's coming up...When someone says they hate you, you better believe them...don't wait until it's too late."

Her father told her during the war, "This will be the last time they will kill us because when we survive this, I know we will have our own country so that no one can push us around." Toby drew parallels between what happened in Israel this year to what she went through in Europe during World War II. "It feels like I am living through it a second time," and added, "[but] this time we have an army, we have a country to protect us."

While her message was certainly cautionary, she left us with a sense of optimism that if we stand up against hate and injustice, we will all prevail. One person can make a difference. One person can save a life. Everyone should have hope.

## SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

### The Obligation of Memory

**Marlene W. Yahalom, PhD, ASYV Director of Education.**  
Chapter X in, *The Casualty of Contempt: The Alarming Rise of Antisemitism and What Can Be Done to Stop It*, AD Fruh (Ed.)

**It is a privilege for me**, Director of Education of the American Society for Yad Vashem, and a daughter and granddaughter of six Holocaust survivors, to contribute to the publication of *Casualty of Contempt* to address the rising tide of antisemitism. We need to draw attention to the degree and reality of antisemitism. It is on the rise and is part of a current environment stained with discrimination aimed at other victim groups as well. As one way of response, we can consider applying important strategies developed in Holocaust education by the International School of Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem.

We must first ask ourselves – why is it important to remember the Holocaust? How can we ensure that future generations do not forget the Holocaust? What advocacy do we owe to Holocaust Survivors?

What lessons can we teach and learn from to ensure that manifest and latent forms of antisemitism are identified, and addressed before they develop and escalate to dangerous proportions?

The Holocaust is not simply a contemporary issue. It stretches back past the parameters of the modern era – into the medieval age and beyond to the inception of antisemitism. Antisemitism, discrimination of Jews of all walks of life, was not a new concept in 1933. It was widespread and prevalent in many countries. The Nazi regime amplified and manipulated the latent prejudices of its citizens. It did not create these prejudices.

The Holocaust also demonstrates the atmosphere in which genocide can take place. The beliefs that result in a genocide survive because the political and social climate make these beliefs acceptable and unchallenged. The Holocaust therefore must be remembered because it is an example of how these trends can and do become more threatening.

The hatred of the Holocaust may be understood as manifestations of historical antisemitism. In the realm of Holocaust education, this hatred persists by Holocaust deniers who question the validity of this event. While as a nation we advocate freedom of speech and expression, this principle rests on due diligence of fact checking with regard to the subject matter. Either through ignorance or purpose,

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Carver Middle School (FL) - Faculty Professional Development Day Workshop

antisemitism is taking a new presence in the arena of public opinion. It is apparent in Holocaust denial and in shifting attitudes about Israel.

Our responsibility from the lessons of the Holocaust is to ensure that the representation of history is accurate and true. In doing so, we are mindful of the role of history as a vehicle to transmit the lessons of this event – to treat all people with respect, dignity, and humanity. Practicing due diligence in sustaining accurate information is key. Education is a critical part of this process. By encouraging learning and evaluating facts, we enable communities to make informed decisions guiding their attitudes and choices. Communities with proactive citizens striving for the greater good is a key objective. Holocaust education is a key resource for these messages and lessons.

We are all painfully aware of the challenges we have encountered while executing this mission. These serious challenges include the shrinking survivor population and therefore direct eyewitness testimony, the rapid growth of Holocaust denial facilitated by the reemergence of white supremacists, and the sheer passage of time since the Holocaust.

Educational strategies are therefore put in place to provide guidance and instruction for clarity and “honest reporting” on facts about the Holocaust. The challenge is to address all efforts whose motives are in deep-rooted antisemitism disguised to promote seemingly independent political issues. Examples include minimizing the Holocaust and claiming it never happened. To address these challenges, we focus on raising awareness about the Holocaust, highlighting its significance in global and Jewish history, and empowering teachers to incorporate this subject into their curricula to raise awareness about this important subject.

The legacy of the Holocaust is acutely relevant to understanding the resurgence of antisemitism. The danger lies in the segment of any population that is not an ‘expert’ on a topic and is easily influenced by those who distort knowledge to gain a following. These similar conditions present situations that are targets for information manipulation.

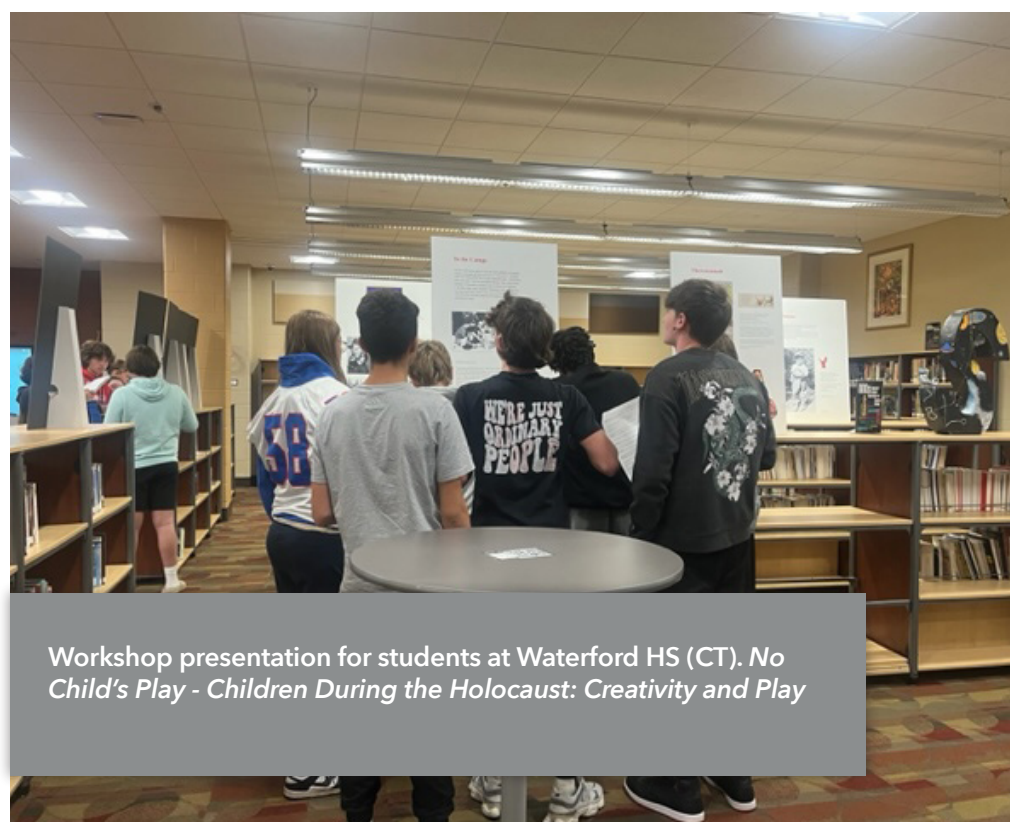
We need to identify the avenues of knowledge dissemination and work to enforce the accurate presentation of facts from these resources. This effort is intended to create a platform for the public to make informed decisions and formulate opinions

based on facts and not propaganda. Attempts to distort and manipulate information on the Holocaust or on attitudes to Israel in order to generate and encourage antisemitism or anti zionism is a call to action to recognize the reality of the world around us – antisemitism is couched under rhetoric that is subtle, insidious, and powerful.

In this regard, college campuses have become centers of anti-Jewish activity, with antisemitism rising among students – a threatening omen for the future. Manifestations of this trend might include the targeting of the State of Israel by making it accountable to criteria not required of any other nation, or by holding the Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel. This is not to say any country is above criticism. Criticism of Israel like that leveled against any other country cannot be targeted as antisemitic. Antisemitism is applying a double standard, raising accusations against Israel that include demonizing Israel, and claiming Israel’s right to exist is illegal. We need to resist efforts to manipulate and distort history. In this process, we need to be mindful of factors that can influence decision making and counter these efforts through education.

We further present the Holocaust to restore the humanity of each of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust. In doing so, we invite the public to appreciate each victim as a person and not as a statistic. By understanding what was lost rather than how it was lost, we create empathy for the

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Workshop presentation for students at Waterford HS (CT). No Child’s Play - Children During the Holocaust: Creativity and Play



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victims by presenting them as people and not numbers on a chart. Building on this empathy, we encourage students to realize the obligation to appreciate differences and be tolerant of all groups and minorities. If we do not teach these lessons, then every minority is at risk of being victimized with potentially unimaginable consequences. In the context of today's current events, we realize this lesson perhaps more than ever.

Teaching about the Holocaust and commemorating this event is ultimately a tribute to the victims and a responsibility incumbent upon generations following the Holocaust. We want to ensure this kind of event will never repeat itself. Had this awareness existed some 75 years ago, the name Auschwitz today would simply be another city on the map of Europe.

## KRISTALLNACHT COMMEMORATION IN SOUTH FLORIDA

**On November 9**, in commemoration of the 85th anniversary of Kristallnacht, Denise Herschberg, ASYV Southeast Region Director, was the featured guest speaker at the Residences at Morse Life in West Palm Beach, Florida. The event included presentations to residents of the Independent Living at the Levin Palace, as well as to those who reside in the Assisted Living at Tradition. In all, close to 100 residents came together to remember and commemorate the Night of Broken Glass.

In light of the current war in Israel, Herschberg focused on the impact Yad Vashem has in the training of soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Every soldier in the IDF takes part in a meaningful Holocaust educational experience, facilitated by Yad Vashem, during their service. For years, this program has been held at the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem.

However, this was a logistical challenge for the thousands of troops who train in the Southern part of the country.

To address this, the IDF and Yad Vashem partnered to create "Before My Very Eyes", the new Yad Vashem Education Center for IDF soldiers. Opened in November 2021, this center is housed on the Ariel Sharon Training Campus in Israel's Negev desert to ensure logistical constraints do not interfere with a soldier's growth and education.

Herschberg explained how this program underscored the important role Yad Vashem plays in educating Israeli soldiers on being a moral army and how the lessons of the Holocaust are an important part in understanding the vital need for a Jewish army.

Additionally, the ASYV Yizkor card project was introduced to the residents. Each card contains a photo and information on one of the victims of the Shoah. Those present were invited to take a card and say Yizkor for the person they had selected throughout the year.



ASYV Southeast Region Director Denise Herschberg

## YLA BOOK CLUB PRESENTS: Running for Shelter

Sylvia Moskowitz, Western Region Director

On October 16, 2023, ASYV presented the latest YLA Virtual Book Club installment. It was our great privilege to present *Running for Shelter*, a Holocaust memoir retold by the survivor's granddaughter Suzette Sheft. What was particularly unique about this author is that she is just 16 years old and began writing the book at the tender age of thirteen.

Suzette is currently a senior at the Horace Mann School in New York City. She lives in Manhattan with her mother, twin brother, and two dogs. In her free time, she enjoys writing, reading, running, and teaching. She hopes that her novel encourages other children to record important stories from their own family legacies.

A truly special young woman, Suzette's reason for writing the book is particularly poignant. Her father died of pancreatic cancer when Suzette was very young. While she has memories of him sitting on her bed recounting stories of his life, she laments the fact that she did not commit them to writing so she would have them to remember after his death. She did not want the same thing to happen with her grandmother and so, she began interviewing her and diligently recording the stories on paper.

What she ended up with was an unusual story of Holocaust survival that is eminently suitable for both adults and younger readers (age 11 and up) alike. It is an episodic tale of relocation from country to country and relationships broken and rekindled.

The book begins in Vienna, late 1930s. Bright, red-headed Inge Eisenger leads a privileged life with her glamorous, distant mother. When forced to flee from Nazi-occupied Austria to Switzerland, Inge sees her young life turned upside down. She hopes to finally connect with her mother during their escape, but her mother soon abandons her. Vulnerable and alone, Inge makes her way to Paris before reuniting with her grandmother in Central France. But even there, Inge, now calling herself Monique, endures one hardship after another – all while her grandmother keeps a family secret that, if revealed, could result in their whole family's demise.

The story is gripping and offers a window through which readers can witness the challenges of growing up during the Holocaust. As this important chapter of history fades from living memory, Inge's tale offers hope to a new generation who must also cultivate courage and determination in the face of personal and political challenges. No stranger to personal challenges herself, Suzette has gifted us with an approachable book that tells a unique story of her familial origin.

The audience had many questions for Suzette which she thoughtfully answered with poise and dignity. The future of Holocaust education feels just a little safer with young people like Suzette emerging as spokespeople for their grandparents' stories.




The program was moderated by Western Region YLA member Nicole Garay who felt a special kinship with Suzette. Her grandmother Sarlotte "Shari" Garay was born in Nove Zamky, Slovenia in 1921 and survived the horrors of Auschwitz to build a beautiful life and family in her adopted city of San Francisco. Shari died in 2022 at the age of 101. Honored on her 100th birthday by the city of Tiburon, the event took place on the first Yahrzeit of her death.

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*Suzette's book is available on Amazon.  
A recording of the virtual program is  
available at [https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=66ksdHkd12U&t=27s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66ksdHkd12U&t=27s).*

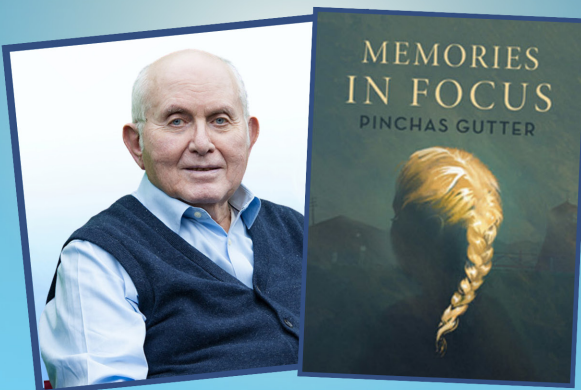
We invite you to join us for the next book club program which will take place on December 19, 2023, at 9:00 am PST/12:00 noon EST and will feature Holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter, author of *Memories in Focus* which tells his own harrowing tale as a child of 10-years-old separated from his family in the Warsaw Ghetto and sent through a series of concentration camps. The program is being presented jointly with the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem and will be moderated by CSYV National Chair, Shael Rosenbaum.



JOIN ASYV AND CSYV FOR A VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB

## MEMORIES IN FOCUS

*Featuring Holocaust survivor and author Pinchas Gutter*  
Moderated by Shael Rosenbaum, CSYV National Chair



**Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023 | 12:00 PM EST / 9:00 AM PST**

## YLA CORNER

### Dr. Alexa Fine and Jonathan Fine

Although we are not direct descendants of survivors, understanding and remembering the Holocaust was an inseparable part of our upbringing and broader Jewish identity. A deep sense of the concept that we are all responsible for one another ("Kol Israel Arevim Zeh B'zeh") was deeply ingrained in us. We were taught that we are all one Jewish family and as such, we have an unbreakable responsibility to those who perished in the Holocaust. It is up to each one of us to ensure that subsequent generations live to honor their memory and continue their legacy by living as strong, proud, and united Jews. Yad Vashem's tireless efforts to memorialize the horrors of the Holocaust while educating the world, both Jew and Gentile alike, are paramount to ensuring "Never Again" means never again.

We began to formally engage with Yad Vashem and ASYV as a family in 2017 and our efforts have continued to increase every year. We are consistently impressed with the breadth of Yad Vashem's efforts across the globe and the exceptional group of people who devote their time to advancing its cause.

We will never stop fighting to ensure the legacy of

the Holocaust is not just an indelible part of Jewish identity, but also at the forefront of global society's efforts to promote tolerance, dispel hatred, and be a voice for those facing persecution. Holocaust education is ever more relevant as we confront a world scarred by discrimination and the kind of

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Randy Fine, Michele Fine, Holocaust survivor Ed Mosberg z"l, Jonathan Fine, and Alexa Fine.



violence against Jews not seen since the advent of Nazi Germany. History has taught us that unity, vigilance, and the strength of the State of Israel are the pillars of our continuity, especially as we approach a post-survivor world.

It is incumbent on us, our children, grandchildren, and those after them, to continue sharing the lessons of

the Holocaust with the same vigor as the survivors our generation has been privileged to learn from. These stories must be felt and understood by both Jews and non-Jews alike.

We are honored to support the efforts of Yad Vashem and embrace our responsibility of "Kol Israel Arevim Zeh B'zeh."

## BOY WITH A VIOLIN: A STORY OF SURVIVAL

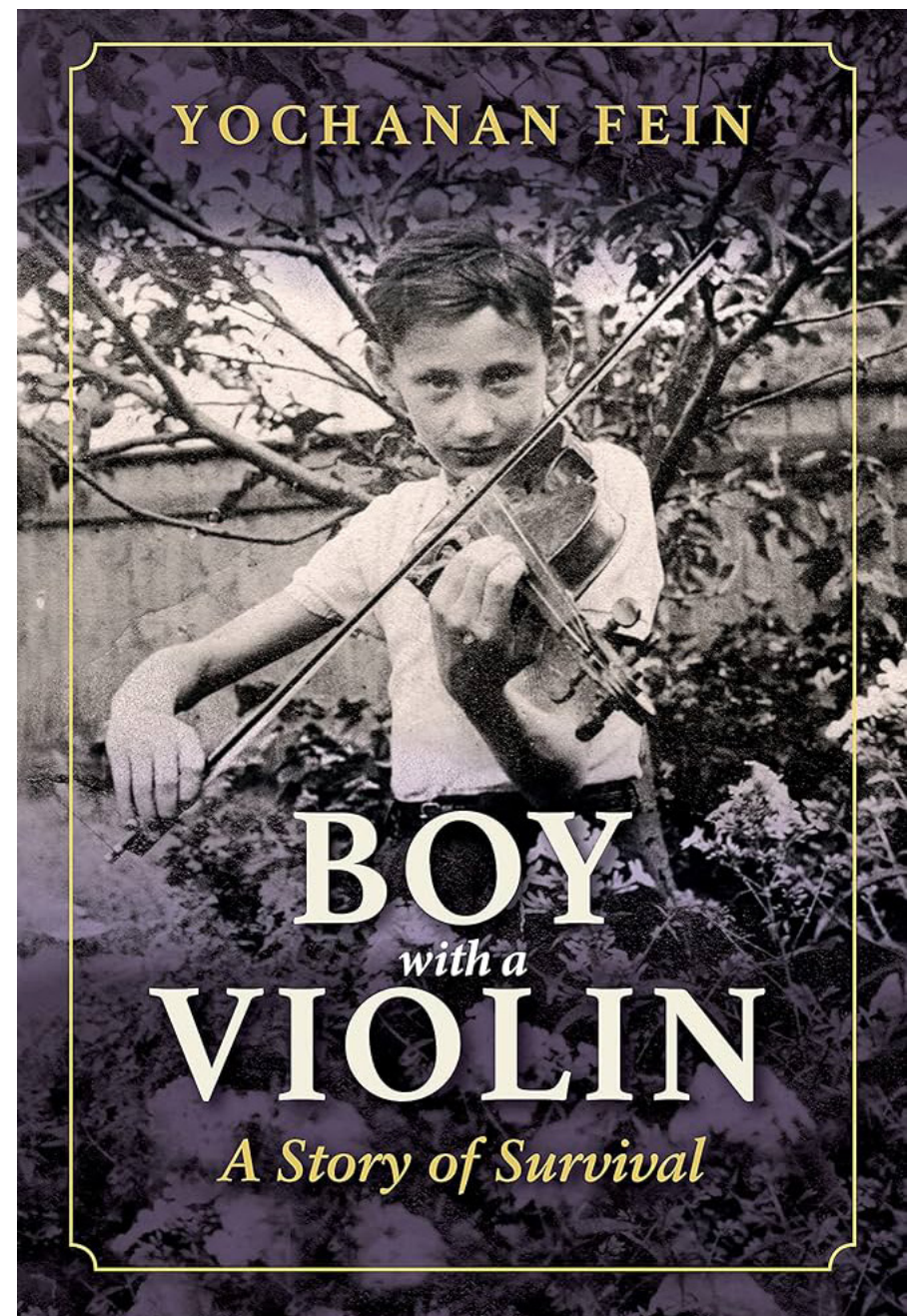
By Yochanan Fein, Translated by  
Penina Reichenberg

Published by Indiana University Press, Bloomington,  
Indiana, 2022, 320 pp. Softcover

Reviewed by Dr. Diane Cypkin

Every Holocaust survivor has a miraculous story to tell full of serendipitous details that, in the end, made all the difference as regards their survival. For example, because they went left instead of right they weren't seen by a Nazi collaborator. Because they weren't at home when the Gestapo came to their door they weren't arrested. Because they weren't at work that day they weren't caught in a Nazi roundup. Yochanan Fein, the author of *Boy with a Violin: A Story of Survival*, owes his survival to the fact that he played the violin... and the good-hearted nature of a Lithuanian, Jonas Paulavičius, who viewed the Nazis as the enemy and determinedly decided to fight them by saving those they persecuted.

By 1944, Yochanan, a fourteen-year-old Jewish boy, originally from Panemunė, "a partially agricultural suburb of Kaunas" in Lithuania, had lost most of his family and was living in the overcrowded, poverty-stricken Kaunas ghetto with his mother's relatives. Only Yehudit, a devoted sister from his immediate family, was left to him. A grandmother had died, his parents had been rounded up by the Nazis in 1942, and another sister and brother had escaped. Meanwhile, Jews in the ghetto believed that being "productive" would save them from their Nazi persecutors. Thus, Yochanan "worked several jobs," even as he helped his courageous sister surreptitiously get food into the starving ghetto. But fear was increasing with every sudden and ruthless "Action." And that led to Jews building ever-more malinas (underground hideouts)



and lots of talk about smuggling Jewish children out of the ghetto and saving them from what many believed would be a disastrous and deadly end for them all.

Indeed, that's how Jonas started saving Jews. He agreed to take in a very young Jewish boy named Schima'leh. And, unbelievably, when the three-year-old boy simply couldn't "acclimatize" himself to being with the Paulavičius's, Jonas actually invited his parents and a grandmother to come hide in his home

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too, a perfect place in an isolated area of Panemunė. “Another advantage was that only a few people visited his home because Jonas was a tough, unfriendly man, and the family maintained a position of seclusion toward their surroundings.” Meanwhile, since he “worked as a carpenter in the railways workshops in Šančiai” and was handy, Jonas created a variety of hideouts in and outside of the house. At the same time, Antanina, his wife, saw to everyone’s subsistence needs importantly making sure neighbors suspected nothing as regards the number of people living in the house.

It was at this point that Jonas began thinking about the possibility of saving even more people and wondering about just who he could save. After all, he couldn’t save everyone. His “tough decision”: he would “save Jewish intellectuals, on the assumption that after the mass destruction, the nation would need leaders and educated people.” In short, among others, he saved a Jewish couple that were doctors, an engineer, and Yochanan, the author of *Boy with a Violin*. Why Yochanan? Jonas dealt with an “anti-fascist German sergeant” who “appropriated” goods from a supply depot and sold these goods through Jonas. One day, the German decided to sell Jonas his violin in order to support his starving family back home. Jonas actually bought the violin for his son, Kęstutis, along with lessons provided by the seller. His thinking: once his son knew how to play, he could make money performing at weddings and some such events. But as it turned out, his son had neither musical abilities nor any interest in learning the violin. However, Kęstutis did know someone, two years younger than him, in his “pre-war school . . . a prodigy, a Jewish boy who played the violin.” And that was Yochanan – who would soon come to live with the Paulavičius’s – and remain grateful to Jonas and the entire family forever.

Interestingly, Jonas also helped the people he saved after the war. To some, he gave money enabling them to leave Lithuania. In Yochanan’s case, he helped revive the family’s flour mill, lost to them in the war. He saw to it that the remnants of Yochanan’s family had money. He helped Yochanan continue his studies. In fact, readers of *Martyrdom and Resistance* will find the section about Yochanan’s studying in Kaunas, Lithuania after the war especially eye-opening. Yochanan was the only “Jewish boy in the entire school” and anti-Semitism was still quite rife. As Yochanan himself writes: “I got pushed ‘by mistake’ and knocked down ‘by accident’ and the nickname ‘Jew Boy’ was heard more than

once.” Additionally, “boys from other classes came to see the Jewish exhibit [Yochanan]” to check if he had horns. Luckily, he wasn’t in Lithuania for very long . . . Life events would take him to Poland, and, finally, Israel in 1950.

In 1988 at an “impressive ceremony at Yad Vashem,” Jonas and his wife Antanina “were granted a certificate as Righteous Among the Nations, and a tree was planted in their name.” Sadly, only Antanina was there along with those they had saved and many, many Lithuanian immigrants to Israel. Jonas was murdered in 1952. The reason? No one is quite sure . . .

If only there had been more people like the Paulavičius’s . . .

Dr. Diane Cytkin is a Professor Emerita at Pace University.

## WHY IS THIS ANNIVERSARY OF KRISTALLNACHT DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHERS? - OPINION

BY ROBERT ROZETT

Why is this Kristallnacht anniversary different from all other Kristallnacht anniversaries since the end of World War II?

The short answer is October 7, 2023, and Hamas’s barbaric, genocidal rampage against Israel.

When the Kristallnacht pogrom erupted on November 9, 1938 the Nazis did not have a policy of murdering the Jews of Germany or anywhere else. The pogrom was a specific point in the continuum of events that unfolded and led to the Nazis’ policy to annihilate the Jews everywhere. Hamas’s attack was clearly part of their stated, patently genocidal goal to destroy the state of Israel.

The barbarism of Kristallnacht, with more than 100 murdered, a great many beatings, the wanton destruction of communal and private Jewish property, the massive intrusion into Jewish homes and the arrest





Jews rounded up in Stettin after Kristallnacht.  
(photo credit: PICRYL)

of some 30,000 Jewish men and their incarceration in concentration camps essentially to force them to emigrate, may be considered the start of the Nazi genocide against the Jews.

This was not yet the total annihilation of a national, ethnic or religious group, but it was those aspects directed at making it impossible for such a group to remain intact as a group by any combination of murder, ethnic cleansing, destruction of culture, persecution of leaders and more.

Before Kristallnacht, Nazi policies aimed to separate Jews from Aryans and convince them that they had no future in Germany, but the Jewish collective in Germany, albeit with many restrictions, could still continue to exist. Kristallnacht was arguably the start of the stage of shutting down Jewish communal life and of ethnic cleansing, using brutal physical force to coerce Jews into leaving Germany.

### OCTOBER 7 TESTIMONIES REMIND OF KRISTALLNACHT HORRORS

Elements of the testimonies we have about the Nazi rampage bear striking similarity to those we have heard from survivors of October 7. The late Hillel Schechter related in his testimony about Kristallnacht:

"The general picture was of shouting and yelling of SA and SS, including some in civilian clothes.... They

went into one house after the other. They knew the neighborhood was mostly Jewish. At this point they did not differentiate between Polish and non-Polish Jews, we were all the same. We heard screaming, looked through a window and saw them beating Jews, pushing men around. They had lists of Jews with German citizenship and took them to concentration camps like Buchenwald. All my uncles were taken there. They went into houses, threw the furniture through the windows, beat up the people. A whole group of them came into our house. My mother hid me in a closet. She was afraid they would beat me.... [In our house] Jews lived on the first and second floors, on the third floor lived our landlord who was non-Jewish. We lived on the fourth floor and there were Jewish families on the fifth floor. When they got to our apartment, they started breaking the door.... What saved us was that above us was a Jewish family with three sons. They had resisted the SA men...and so the SA upstairs called the ones on our floor for assistance. This saved us.

"They fought upstairs for a long time until everyone had been arrested. They had beaten them all terribly. This is why they could not accomplish their mission to break into our apartment. During this whole event we heard screaming and crying. It was terrible. We saw how they were beating people furiously. It was very difficult to watch. They took some of the men.

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KRISTALLNACHT RALLY, aka 'November Pogroms,' 2022.  
(credit: SUSAN KENNEDY)

Not far from our house was a river that looked like a canal.... They took the Jews over there, put them up against the wall and beat them. We, thank God, did not suffer physically from the SA, at least not then... We sat in the apartment for three days. We did not dare put on a light. We had covered the windows. We did not know what was going on. We did not know if we could go out. We did not dare to leave."

When Jews were caught by the Nazis on Kristallnacht, they were beaten horrifically and arrested, but relatively few were actually murdered.

On October 7th Hamas did not commit a pogrom like the one 85 years ago. Rather, Hamas murdered just about everyone they encountered. They indiscriminately killed soldiers and mostly civilians, men, women, children, infants, the elderly, Jews and foreign workers – everyone, except for nearly 250 they took as hostages.

No one drove away the rampaging Nazis from their Jewish victims on Kristallnacht. There are stories of Germans who hid their Jewish neighbors from the attackers, but it can be said that virtually nobody defended Jews with force. After the Kristallnacht pogrom around the world, there were expressions of shock and some sympathy for the Jews. Some doors briefly opened for Jewish emigrants and soon were mostly shut again. Short-lived sympathy would only go so far.

The Hamas atrocities ignited a defensive war. Many leaders around the world have declared support for Israel's right and responsibility to defend its citizens against Hamas and defeat Hamas. But in

many quarters, throngs celebrated Hamas, and in many quarters the initial wave of sympathy and understanding that Hamas must be defeated has waned in the light of reports and images of the destruction in Gaza the war has engendered.

Following Kristallnacht, beginning two years into World War II, the Jews of Germany, and all parts of Europe that came under Nazi domination and influence were subjected to the Final Solution, resulting in the murder of two-thirds of the Jews of Europe. Hamas is not carrying out a Final Solution for all Jews, rather Hamas is currently focused on destroying Israel and killing all the Jews there. Israel's war against Hamas is to ensure that Hamas never again will take any steps toward perpetrating their declared genocide.

On this Kristallnacht anniversary, we must remember that Jewish Lives Matter and can never again be forfeited like they were during the Holocaust years.

*Dr. Robert Rozett is a Senior Historian at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research in Jerusalem. He is the author of "Conscripted Slaves: Hungarian Jewish Forced Laborers on the Eastern Front" (Yad Vashem, 2013), and co-editor with Dr. Iael Nidam Orvieto of "After So Much Pain and Anguish: First Letters after Liberation" (Yad Vashem, 2016).*

Via [jpost.com](https://jpost.com)



# HOW HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS IN ISRAEL ARE COPING WITH THE WAR

BY OLIVIA B. WAXMAN

—WITH ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY ARYN BAKER/  
ROME AND ANNA GORDON/LONDON



Two days after the Israel-Hamas war broke out on Oct. 7, 83-year-old Holocaust survivor Yaakov Weissmann relocated from his home near Gaza in southern Israel—where 23 of his family members live—to an apartment in an elderly home in a safer area southeast of Tel-Aviv. Between the experience of being uprooted and watching the coverage of Israeli hostages separated from their families by Hamas, he is experiencing a painful sense of déjà-vu.

“When I saw Hamas take as hostages the old, children, women, this image makes me think back to the Holocaust and all of the children who have lost their parents, never to see them again,” Weissmann, who never saw his father again after he was taken by the Nazis in France during World War II, told TIME in a video call on Oct. 25, speaking in French via a translator.

Weissmann is one of about 120,000 Holocaust survivors in Israel. All are elderly and many are in need. Today, some remain in evacuated or partly evacuated cities because they have nowhere else to go, according to Gabriel Sod, Director of Government Relations at the Israel office of UJA Federation, one of the charitable organizations that provides assistance

to Holocaust survivors. Holocaust survivors have found it difficult to get groceries or medicine because many stores and doctor’s offices were closed during the few weeks of the war. Such is true for all elderly Israelis, but the emotional toll on survivors can feel different: While the Israel-Hamas war—which has claimed the lives of more than 1,400 Israelis—cannot be compared to what they experienced in the 1930s and ‘40s, the fear, pain, and disruptions to daily life affecting Israelis right now has left many Holocaust survivors reckoning with their enduring trauma.

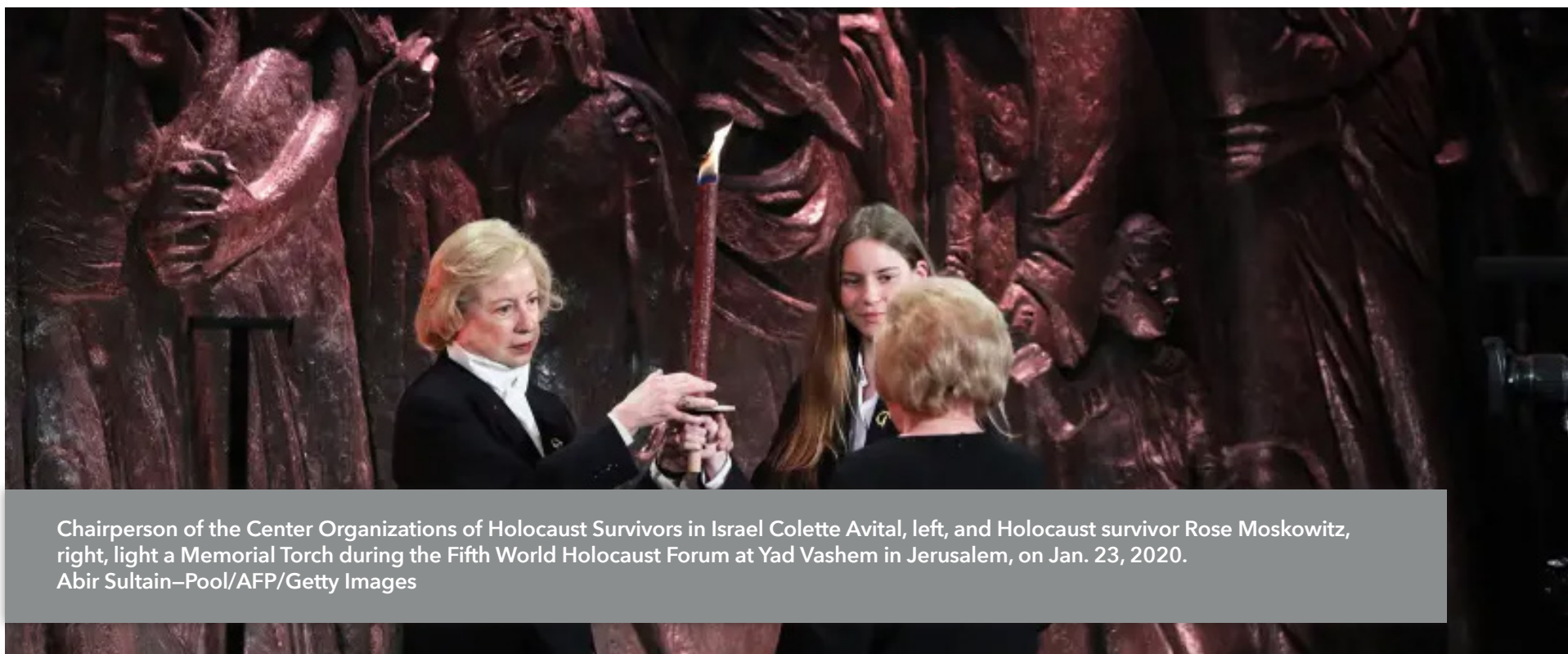
“It’s a terrible time for all of Israel—how much more so for Holocaust survivors who have seen what the rest of us can only imagine?” says Gideon Taylor, President of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference), which provides compensation to Holocaust survivors and grants to social services agencies worldwide.

Nonprofits and charitable organizations worldwide have begun flowing support to groups on the ground working with this population. The Claims Conference set aside approximately \$7.5 million for the care of Holocaust survivors after the war started. Social services organizations that it supports include Latet and Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Survivors, which prepare care packages of food and hygiene products. Organizations that help Holocaust survivors in the U.S. are fundraising for their Israeli counterparts, like New York City-based nonprofit The Blue Card, which is raising money for the Foundation for the Welfare of Holocaust Victims.

The Jewish philanthropic group UJA Federation usually donates \$40 million to Israeli charitable organizations annually, and in the first two weeks of the war, already allocated \$35 million. Social services groups that UJA Federation is giving grants to include L’Ma’anam, which helps connect Holocaust survivors in the Dead Sea area to doctors and nurses, including retired medical professionals. Because survivors are having a hard time getting to centers where they can talk to a therapist, UJA Federation gave a grant to Amcha so that it could set up a hotline to provide psychological counseling remotely. And since the war began, staffers at the museum and education center Yad Vashem, which helps Holocaust survivors record their memories of the war, are visiting the homes of the survivors they work with to bring them any supplies they need and keep them company.

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Chairperson of the Center Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel Colette Avital, left, and Holocaust survivor Rose Moskowitz, right, light a Memorial Torch during the Fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, on Jan. 23, 2020. Abir Sultain–Pool/AFP/Getty Images

"I cannot stop the tears," says Colette Avital, 84, Tel Aviv-based chairperson of the Center Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel, who still remembers her father being beaten by them when she was a little girl in Romania. "The people who today are in their 80s and 90s...all the images of the past come back. They have nightmares, if they can sleep at all at night."

Watching their extended family struggle to find safety during the Israel-Hamas war has left many of them feeling helpless. In a video call on Oct. 26, Naftali Fürst, a 91-year-old Holocaust survivor in Haifa who lived



Naftali Fürst in his home in Haifa, on Jan. 20, 2020. Ilia Yefimovich–picture alliance/Getty Images

in concentration camps for three years during World War II, says he was in a panic on Oct. 7 because his granddaughter and great-grandson lost phone service and electricity in Kfar Aza in Southern Israel and spent hours in a bomb shelter. They went on to stay with his daughter, but the family is mourning his grandson-

in-law's parents, who he says were killed that day in Kfar Aza. When people ask Fürst how he was able to survive the Holocaust, he always says, "I needed a lot of luck." He is grateful that his granddaughter and great-grandson also got lucky. But he feels like the future is still uncertain. "We are very sad and don't feel secure because we don't know what will happen tomorrow or in another half hour," Fürst says in Hebrew. "I'm not young now. I'm 91 years old...I didn't think I would need to experience a trauma like this again." Fürst is also one of many Jews who question whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is fit for the job of wartime leader, arguing, "Some people say it's not right of me to talk negatively about my country, but this is how I feel and I don't care who hears it."

Rena Quint, an 87-year-old survivor in Jerusalem who lost her entire family in the Holocaust, says watching the television footage of the war has brought back memories of seeing dead bodies in Bergen Belsen concentration camp and being separated from her mother in a ghetto in Poland. But she refuses to shelter in place. Thinking of her 12 grandsons serving as reservists in the Israel Defense Force, she goes to her local synagogue and ties tzitzit, the fringes on prayer shawls, for soldiers. "I, at 87, cannot run around, but I can sit and put these together," she said in a video call on Oct. 24. She has opened up her extra bedroom to a woman whose house in southern Israel burned down. "I could not have survived as a little girl unless people took care of me, who got rid of my lice, who held my hand while I was walking in the snow," she says. "If they helped me, then I have to help others."

Via [time.com](https://www.time.com)



## YAD VASHEM OPENS THE BUILDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR HOLOCAUST STUDIES SO THAT EVACUATED CHILDREN FROM SOUTHERN ISRAEL CAN GO BACK TO SCHOOL

**Today, Yad Vashem**, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, opened the building of the International School for Holocaust Studies to some 300 students ranging from grades 1 through 12, so that they could resume regular educational activities despite the ongoing war. Yad Vashem's Directorate, together with the Ministry of Education and the Regional Council of Sedot HaNegev, have created an environment for the displaced families and children from the south relocated to the vicinity of Jerusalem, the opportunity to return to school restoring some sense of mental and emotional resilience.



A classroom in the International School for Holocaust Studies

Starting this morning, the International School, which is located on the other side of the Mount of Remembrance will offer a variety of routine lessons adapted for elementary, middle and high school students. Some fifty Yad Vashem staff have volunteered to assist in this effort.

The building of the International School also

underwent special visual adjustments, to allow a pleasant reception for the students. During the school day, each student will receive a learning kit with and meals. In addition to classes for students, Yad Vashem will offer lectures on a variety of topics for parents who accompany their children to school at Yad Vashem.

Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan said:

*"At a time when we are experiencing one of the most difficult crises in the history of our country, it is our duty to extend a helping hand and do what we can to support those affected. Israelis and Jews worldwide are united together in the face of those who seek to harm us. By opening the doors of our International School, we hope to provide these children with a routine in order to infuse a sense of normalcy and provide for their continued educational future."*

Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies normally operates to impart the memory of the Holocaust to groups of educators, students and community leaders and influencers from around the world. These efforts are part of a special Yad Vashem Initiative entitled "Yad B'Yad", which is spearheaded by employees of the organization.

Via [yadvashem.org](http://yadvashem.org)



Children from the southern region of Israel attending school at Yad Vashem





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