

Yad Vashem Jerusalem

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Searching for
the Identity of
the Owner of a
Pendant Found
in Sobibór

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27 January

International Holocaust Remembrance Day Worldwide



In honor of International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, popularly known as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yad Vashem was involved in a large number of events and commemorative activities in Israel, throughout the world, online and via social media.

■ Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev participated in a **special Israeli Government Cabinet Meeting** on 22 January dedicated to discussing Holocaust commemoration and the status of global antisemitism in the presence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other ministers. Shalev highlighted the work and accomplishments of Yad Vashem in the various international and local forums and committees for Holocaust remembrance and commemoration. On 24 January, the Knesset marked the day in its general assembly.

■ On 26 January, Yad Vashem held its **annual symposium for members of the international diplomatic corps**. Ambassadors

"We are fulfilling our obligation never to forget, and to keep in mind that every victim had a story, a family, a childhood, a future cut short."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

and representatives from some 50 countries, including the US, Canada, the UK, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Poland, Germany, Hungary, Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania attended this event. Following a keynote speech by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Yad Vashem Synagogue, the Director of Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research Dr. Iael Nidam Orvieto addressed the audience. In her lecture, Dr. Nidam Orvieto told the story of Ruth and Meir Kalka, a young Jewish couple who

fled the Czystochowa ghetto and wandered for some two years from refuge to refuge, until they were finally liberated. During their travels, Ruth wrote a diary on a small metal-bound notebook. Dr. Nidam Orvieto displayed the original diary, which was donated to Yad Vashem by Ruth and Meir's children, to the participants. In addition, the diplomats toured the exhibition "Stars Without a Heaven," which tells the story of the Holocaust from the point of view of children, and heard a presentation by Yad Vashem Archives Director and Fred Hillman Chair for Holocaust Documentation Dr. Haim Gertner.

■ On 27 January, the **annual ceremony commemorating the deportation of Italian Jews during the Shoah** took place at Yad Vashem in the presence of the Italian Ambassador to Israel, in coordination with the Italian Embassy.

■ The **"Generation to Generation-Bearers of the Holocaust and Heroism Legacy"** organization held a special event under the

"It is a testament to the Jewish people that we remember all of the victims of the Holocaust, whether they are related to us or not."

Joe Lara, participant in Yad Vashem's Facebook Event: IRemember Wall



banner "Bystanders: A Current Perspective," in cooperation with Yad Vashem. Speaking at the event were Holocaust survivor Michael Gilad, Righteous Among the Nations Department Director Irena Steinfeldt, philosopher Dr. Shimon Azulay and educator Aryeh Barnea.

■ **No Home Movie** was screened at six Cinemateques across Israel. Directed by the late Chantal Akerman, the film won the 2016 Avner Shalev Yad Vashem Chairman's Award for Artistic Achievement in Holocaust-Related Film. Visual Center Director Liat Benhabib gave a short lecture at the screening on 25 January at the Jerusalem Cinemateque.

■ Around the world, the day was observed by academic lectures, educational activities and official memorial events led by Yad Vashem staff and supporters. Yad Vashem Council Chairman Rabbi Israel Meir Lau spoke at a **remembrance event sponsored by the European Union in Belgium**; Yad Vashem Director General Dorit Novak took part in **UNESCO's Annual Day**

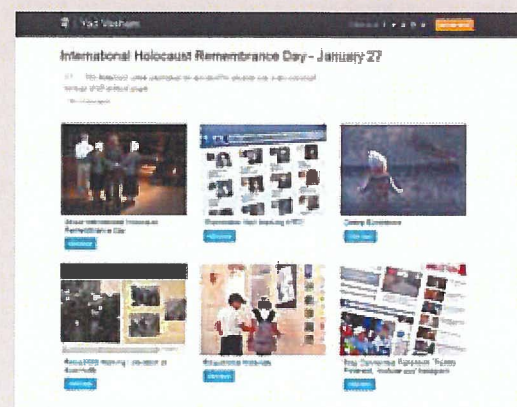
of Commemoration in Paris; Yad Vashem Historian Prof. Dina Porat participated in a **European Jewish Congress event marking the day at the European Parliament in Brussels**; Academic Advisor Prof. Yehuda Bauer lectured at the **UK Foreign Office and the JW3 Jewish Community Center in London**; and Archives Director Dr. Haim Gertner represented Yad Vashem at a **special meeting in Brussels sponsored by EHRI**, the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure.

■ A number of Yad Vashem "ready2print" and traveling exhibitions went on display in many countries worldwide, including the US, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Brazil, Peru and New Zealand. Versions of "I Am My Brother's Keeper," the exhibition honoring the Righteous Among the Nations, was specially tailored for Australian and German audiences, and an Italian version of "Shoah: How Was It Humanly Possible?" was supported by the Italian branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ).

Remembering Online

■ As in previous years, Yad Vashem provided a range of ways for people around the world to learn more about and commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The new online exhibition "We Shall Meet Again" (see pp. 12-13) was uploaded to the Yad Vashem website, as well as Spanish and German versions of the online exhibition "Don't Forget Me," featuring children's personal albums from the Holocaust.



Yad Vashem also launched its **annual Facebook event: The IRemember Wall**. By joining the wall, the user's Facebook profile was randomly linked to the name of a Holocaust victim from Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names and then posted to the wall together with the photo and name of the Holocaust victim. Tens of thousands of people from around the world have participated in this unique commemorative project since it was launched six years ago, with increasing numbers joining each year. Many of the people who joined the event wrote poignant posts on their pages. "It is a testament to the Jewish people that we remember all of the victims of the Holocaust, whether they were related to us or not," wrote Joe Lara from Texas. "We must remind ourselves that many entire families were murdered and that they have no family members left to mourn or remember them. May all of their memories be a blessing." Additionally, thousands of people viewed a unique and moving series featuring the personal stories and pictures of Auschwitz survivors via **Instagram**.

A **mini-site containing relevant commemorative and pedagogical resources**, including new films released in 2016 on Yad Vashem's Holocaust Education Video Toolbox (see p. 9), were all readily available to help thousands of people around the world commemorate the day in a meaningful way.

Education ■ “The Shoah and

Leah Goldstein



■ Conference organizer Ephraim Kaye, Director of the International Seminars and Jewish World Department at the International School for Holocaust Studies, launched the unprecedented event

■ ***“It’s important to convey that when we teach the Holocaust, our students should not acquire a sense of shame, a loss of self-esteem. There needs to be an emphasis on the miraculous behavior of Jews during the Shoah; there needs to be a way of conveying the light amidst the darkness, to teach about the Jewish people who did remarkable things. As Jewish educators, we need to advance Jewish identity and situate Holocaust education in connection to the larger Jewish experience.”***

So stated Prof. Steven Katz, Slater Professor of Jewish and Holocaust Studies at Boston University, at the first International Conference for Jewish Educators held in December 2016 at Yad Vashem. Over 200 Jewish day school principals, headmasters and senior Jewish Studies educators representing 34 countries and six continents around the world gathered at Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies for the conference, entitled “The Shoah and Jewish Identity: Challenges in Jewish Education.” The conference – the largest and most prestigious gathering of worldwide leaders in Jewish education – presented Holocaust education as a compelling, engaging and inspirational topic, which remains relevant to Jewish students in Israel and the Diaspora.

The conference had many generous sponsors, including Genesis Philanthropy Group (GPG), longtime partners of Yad Vashem in the area



■ Yad Vashem Academic Advisor Prof. Yehuda Bauer engaging with the audience of top-level educators

of Holocaust education and research among the Russian-speaking public. In advance of the conference, GPG President and CEO Ilia Salita said: “This conference continues the well-established tradition of academic and practical exchanges between scholars and educators from all over the world, which is enormously important for the future generations of students of the Holocaust.”

The conference presented Holocaust education as a compelling, engaging and inspirational topic, which remains relevant to Jewish students in Israel and the Diaspora

The three full days of the conference were dedicated to reinforcing the role of Holocaust education in modern-day Jewish identity. On the first day, experts investigated Jewish identity during the Shoah through testimonies, artifacts and letters in Yad Vashem’s collections that were left behind by Jewish victims and survivors. In one session, Dr. Robert Rozett, Director of the

Yad Vashem Libraries, presented the recently published Yad Vashem anthology *After So Much Pain and Anguish: First Letters after Liberation*, which he co-edited with International Institute for Holocaust Research Director Dr. Iael Nidam Orvieto. In his talk, he retold the moving story of the American Jewish soldier Sammy Popush, who was among the liberators of Dachau. In a letter to his family back in the US, Popush described the survivors’ astonishment on discovering that he was Jewish, and that even more than their hunger for food, they were desperate to draw strength from his Jewish identity. Participants were also inspired by meetings with Holocaust survivors, with many expressing their apprehension at endeavoring to connect the next generations to Shoah remembrance after the survivor generation has passed.

The second day focused on teaching the Holocaust in formal and informal settings. Dr. Eyal Kaminka, Lily Safra Chair of Holocaust Education and Director of the International School for Holocaust Studies, gave the opening address in which he stated, “Our future is all about the choices we make here and now.” Yad Vashem Academic Advisor Prof. Yehuda Bauer spoke about the effects of Jewish identity on communities and individuals during and after the Shoah: “It’s not what you believe in, it’s how you act,” he declared. “In the end, words become tradition, and tradition becomes identity.”

Jewish Identity”

First International Conference for Jewish Educators



■ Yad Vashem Chief Historian Prof. Dina Porat led one of the expert workshops



■ Yad Vashem Director General Dorit Novak addressing the participants

Participants were then presented with pedagogical workshops for primary, middle and high school, with hands-on demonstrations of many of the age-appropriate and innovative materials created at Yad Vashem, answering the expressed need of many participants for new materials, especially those suitable for grade-school students. "Learning about the Holocaust cannot be just about the mind-boggling numbers," commented Sora Bulka, Dean of The New Seminary, New York. "It must become accessible through hearing about one

woman, one man, one child and their response to their terrible circumstances. When that aspect comes to the fore, we can watch the students engage more and connect."

A number of simultaneous workshops and panel discussions were also held, showcasing multidisciplinary approaches to Holocaust education, such as through testimonies, art, films and technology. Michael Voskoboinik of the Hasten Hebrew Academy of Indianapolis presented the state-of-the-art tools, such as "augmented reality," which he uses to engage

"Our future is all about the choices we make here and now."

Dr. Eyal Kaminka

his students in the topic of the Holocaust: "Using technology helps today's generation understand the themes of the Shoah, develops their motivation and personalizes their learning experience."

The workshops were followed by informal roundtable discussions, providing the participants with opportunities to share with one another as well as with Yad Vashem staff the challenges they face in order to further develop new and more effective ways to integrate Shoah education into Jewish day school curricula. "Because it was an international event, I found it beneficial to hear the viewpoints and issues of other heads of schools," said Angela Capurso, Principal of the Lubavitch Educational Center in Miami Beach, Florida. "These issues are, indeed, universal."

The final day of this extraordinary conference was packed with relevant information, hands-on tools and lively discussions relating to the place of the Holocaust in Jewish identity today.

Rekindling the Lights of Hanukkah

■ As the conference took place during the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, the traditional lighting of the Hanukkah candles was conducted each evening, using *hanukiot* (menorahs) that survived the Holocaust. Honored guests lighting the candles included Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council and Holocaust survivor Rabbi Israel Meir Lau (pictured) and Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky, who were accompanied by family members of the original owners of the *hanukiot*. "The word Hanukkah has the same root as the Hebrew word *hinuch* - education," explained Rabbi Lau. "That is why it is befitting for you all to gather here in Yad Vashem over the festival of Hanukkah for a conference on

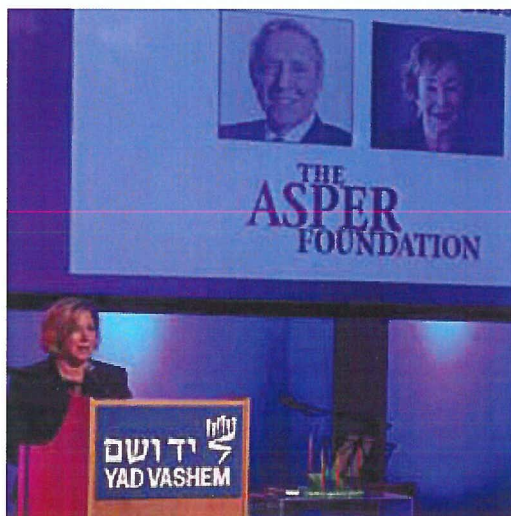
Jewish identity during the Shoah. Three thousand four hundred years of Jewish continuity is the unbroken chain of Jewish immortality and you, the Jewish educators, hold the key for the future destiny of the Jewish people."



"We need to be careful how we employ Holocaust vocabulary, especially in political speech."

Evan Gottesman

Participants gathered in the morning to watch a stimulating address recorded especially for the conference by world-renowned Jewish leader, philosopher and educator Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. Rabbi Sacks urged the gathered assembly to pass on the Jewish ideas of hope and building a better future – so eloquently embodied by Holocaust survivors – through the fight against injustice, through not being defined by antisemitism, and through celebrating the differences upon which humanity itself depends. This spoke to many participants, including Romanian educator Laura Vlaicu: "We must use Holocaust studies to develop and improve awareness of antisemitism as well as the lack of tolerance in both the political and civic environment today."



■ The Asper Foundation's Shai Abramson discussed the challenges of "keeping Holocaust history relevant and engaging"

Former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, The Hon. Irwin Cotler, gave a talk on combating antisemitism and the BDS movement. "We cannot allow antisemitism to define our identity, but we cannot ignore the history of antisemitism," he said. "We have a responsibility to unmask the bearers of false witness, and expose the criminality of the deniers as we protect the dignity of their victims." A panel session, featuring top executives of Jewish institutions in the US, France, Argentina, Russia and Israel, tackled the topic of how the Holocaust shapes contemporary Jewish identity.

The afternoon offered participants the opportunity to hear one of five panels on

contemporary issues: educational trips to Poland; coping with the "new antisemitism" in the classroom; teaching about Israel and Zionism to strengthen Jewish identity; reinforcing informal Jewish education through Shoah programming; and the challenges of Holocaust denial and anti-Israel activities on college campuses. "We are not dealing with Holocaust denial, but Holocaust minimization," said Evan Gottesman, from Rutgers University. "People throw around flagrant comparisons to the Holocaust, which serves to minimize it. We need to be careful how we employ Holocaust vocabulary, especially in political speech, and how we use that imagery." However, Yosef Tarshish, President of the World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS) UK/Israel, added, "Jewish students don't let BDS define their experiences on campus."

In his address to the audience on the Jewish people, Israel and the memory of the Shoah, Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel Natan Sharansky declared: "The fact is that there is no better way to rebuild your Jewish identity or to rediscover your Jewish roots other than through Israel and your connection to Zionism. A world without Israel is a world without optimism, without hope and without Jewish identity."

The conference concluded with the traditional Closing Session In Memory of Izzy and Babs Asper, with Shai Abramson, Consultant at The Asper Foundation-Israel, a major supporter of Yad Vashem and its educational enterprise, giving the formal address. "It is incumbent upon us all to continue to teach the legacy of the Shoah in a way that directly addresses our future generations," she said. "The Asper Foundation wholly identifies with this legacy, and we stand with you as we face – together – the challenges of Holocaust education, against Holocaust denial, against antisemitism and keeping Holocaust history relevant and engaging."

Participants left buoyed by the newfound friendships with fellow top-level educators, as well as a wealth of practical ideas to use in their schools. "This was a great opportunity to come and experience meaningful and top quality *hinuch* from a world-class institution," said Jeremy Stowe-Lindner, Principal of Bialik College, Melbourne, Australia. Tamara Donnenfeld, Director of Lifelong Learning at Temple Beth Am, Florida, agreed: "The subjects were relevant to our schools, students and families and we were able to learn from each other... I am very grateful to Yad Vashem for allowing educators to come together to wrestle with the Jewish challenges we face worldwide."

The International Conference for Jewish Educators was generously supported by The Asper Foundation, the Adelson Family Foundation, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Genesis Philanthropy Group and the Israel Ministry of Diaspora Affairs.

Seminars for Muslim Educators

James Joseph McIntosh

■ In recent months, the International School's European Department organized three seminars for educators from Albania, Morocco and Kosovo (pictured). These projects were particularly noteworthy in view of the fact that all three countries have Muslim-majority populations, and all the more so as Israel has no formal diplomatic relations with either Morocco or Kosovo.



Held in partnership with the Albanian Ministry of Education and Sport, the first-ever seminar for Albanian teachers at Yad Vashem was the result of a visit by European Department Director Richelle Budd Caplan to Albania and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in the presence of Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, in which the Ministry pledged to accredit the seminars held in Jerusalem. Seminar participants voiced their appreciation of the educational materials they received, as well as the opportunity to broaden their historical knowledge.

The group from Morocco included both educators and opinion leaders, and drew considerable coverage in the Arabic and French media. The participants remarked that the seminar's daily schedule was very full, but few would have cut any activities. "Each one of us learned something new. Now it's our turn to educate those who didn't attend this seminar," said one of the participants. "All of us, on our own levels, will work hard to make an impact," said another.

Yad Vashem's cooperation with Kosovo's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology dates back to 2011, and a Yad Vashem expert first visited the country and worked with educators in the capital city of Prishtina in April 2016. The European Department also made contact with the Prishtina branch of the German Forum for Civil Peace Service (forumZFD), which rendered considerable assistance in planning the seminar.

These seminars were sponsored by the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ICHEIC Program for Holocaust Education in Europe, and the Adelson Family Foundation.

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