



HITKANSUT

HAGGADAH

**A Ritual Gathering
for Yom HaShoah**



מכון שאלום הרטמן
SHALOM HARTMAN
INSTITUTE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE SHALOM HARTMAN INSTITUTE OF NORTH AMERICA
ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS:



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WHEN OUR COLLEAGUES AT THE SHALOM HARTMAN INSTITUTE

in Israel approached us about creating an English/North American version of Hitkansut I was intrigued. I understood that this would not merely be a translation of the Hebrew original into English, but an adaptation of a ritual designed for Israelis into one that resonated with North American Jews. This was a peoplehood project, an opportunity to create a new and shared ritual framework for the memory of the Shoah that, as its title suggests, gathers us together.

Hitkansut is translated literally as “convergence.” The challenges of translating the ritual are embodied in its Hebrew name - the English does not easily capture the layered elegance of the Hebrew. The Hebrew root KNS (כנס) is shared by more familiar words like *Beit Keneset* (Synagogue) and the verb *le-hikanes* (“to enter”). The Hitkansut ritual invites us to enter a space of sacred community. But it is a verb in the reflexive form, beckoning us to gather not only with one another but into ourselves, our own memories, family histories, and epigenetic inheritances. In our translation, we settled on the use of both the Hebrew Hitkansut and the word “gathering” in English, and we use them both side by side and interchangeably. We hope that the word Hitkansut will, in time, enter the Jewish lexicon as a word as familiar as seder.

The Hitkansut Haggadah and ritual, like the Passover seder, follows a prescribed order that takes us on a journey from *kinah* to *kimah*, from sitting in grief to rising up to insist on human dignity. And much like a seder, the ritual only comes to life when the communities that perform it add their own voices, memories, songs, artifacts, and texts. Hitkansut may also be compared to a play. There is a “plot,” a narrative that takes us from *the responsibility to remember* to the commitment to *remember responsibly*. Much like a script, Hitkansut only comes alive in the hands of the players, those who participate in the ritual and bring their own memories and voices to the performance. Whichever metaphor resonates most, you and your community can adapt the ritual as a way of both remembering and shaping memory for generations

to come. With fewer and fewer Shoah survivors in our midst to share their own stories, the responsibility to remember is becoming a collective endeavor. Through this ritual, we are remembering together in a personal, participatory, and transformative way – listening to the voices of the past while drawing on our own memories, associations, and understandings in the present.

It has been an honor to work on this translation with a group of outstanding scholars, writers, and Jewish professionals. Thanks to Dara Horn, Nicole Lieberman, and Avram Mlotek for lending their formidable creative talents to the English interpretation. Thanks also to my colleagues, Jennifer Raskas, Miri Miller, Justin Pines, Rebecca Starr, and Nina Kretzmer Seed as well as Rani Jaeger and Meirav Fishman for their creativity, passion for the work, and logistical prowess.

The leadership team of the Shalom Hartman Institute supported this project from vision to execution: Donniel Hartman, Yehuda Kurtzer, Shiri Mersel, Justus Baird, Shraga Bar-On, Eliot Goldstein, Ronit Heyd, and Tziona Koenig-Yair. Thanks especially to Yehuda Kurtzer whose extensive scholarship on the subject of Jewish memory and the Holocaust underpins, inspires, and characterizes this resource and the work of the Shalom Hartman Institute. Without his research, vision, and leadership none of this would have been possible. And finally, thank you to Michal Govrin, the scholar, artist, poet, and daughter whose vision and memory shaped this project and who gently and trustingly guided us as we reshaped it for North American Jews.

Introduction to the North American Edition

Rachel Jacoby Rosenfield

Executive Vice President, Shalom Hartman Institute of North America

April 2022

Background: Introduction to the Israeli Edition

Prof. Michal Govrin

Hitkansut Lead Author, Shalom Hartman Institute, 2017

Translated and edited by the
Shalom Hartman Institute

WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY, BOTH AS AN ISRAELI ARTIST AND

as the daughter of a woman who survived the Shoah, I established a unique research group for the study of the construction of the memory of the Shoah at Jerusalem's Van Leer Institute in 2012. I named the group "Transmitted Memory and Fiction" since, for one who did not experience it, the memory of an event that took place in a distant time and space is always a fictional construction. But what will protect memory from the danger of denial? I invited to the research group neuroscientists, experts on memory, psychoanalysts, curators, historians, and artists from various ethnic groups, as well as survivors and their children and grandchildren, for a professional, ethical, and existential discussion. After three years of activity, the community was invited to days of learning and a well-attended interactive exhibition. This process is documented in the book *But There Was Love—Shaping the Memory of the Shoah* (2021).

The aspiration to share broadly the study group's insights brought about the creation of a special team to design a ritual: the "Hitkansut for Yom HaShoah."

With us were community leaders, intellectuals, and artists, religious and secular, Ashkenazi and Sepharadi, many of them affiliated with the Hartman Institute: Rabbi Tamar Elad Applebaum, Professor Ron Margolin, the founder of Beit Tefillah Israeli Dr. Rani Jaeger, the historian Mali Eizenberg, Yiddish artist Mendy Cahana, Rabbi Aharon Stern, and many others. Everyone brought their own professional expertise. I brought writing and editing from my experience as an author and director of Jewish theater. Since 2017, the Hitkansut ritual has been adopted by the Shalom Hartman Institute and its Department of Ritual, headed by Dr. Rani Jaeger, and has been implemented in schools, youth movements and universities, communities and synagogues, towns and kibbutzim, delegations to Poland, and in memory circles in private homes.

The Hitkansut for Yom HaShoah is a process of becoming. The innumerable voices of the Shoah and of those who remember echoed in the editing and design of this work. I hope that the Hitkansut reverberates for everyone who participates, serving as an invitation to add their own voices and stories.

Seder Hitkansut

The Order of Our Gathering

We Enter, Remember, Lament, Confront, Honor, Reflect.

These are the steps that we take as we gather and experience The Hitkansut Seder, The Seder of our Gathering.

Each of the six sections of this seder builds upon the others.

Each step we take along the path of memory bears out our responsibility to remember and stirs within us the resolve to remember responsibly.

The Seder Hitkansut may be read in unison.

 **ENTER**
 **REMEMBER**
 **LAMENT**
 **CONFRONT**
 **HONOR**
 **REFLECT**

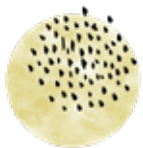


The background of the slide is a photograph of a synagogue entrance, featuring a large, ornate metal door and a set of stone steps leading up to it. A large, semi-transparent yellow rectangle covers the majority of the image. Overlaid on this yellow area are two rectangular boxes: a reddish-brown one on the left and a grey one on the right. The text 'We Enter' is in the reddish-brown box, and 'Invitation' is in the grey box. At the bottom center, there is a line of text in English and Hebrew.

We Enter

Invitation

Hineni — Here I am הֵינֵנִי



WE ENTER

Participants begin the gathering by singing together a song or niggun that is familiar to the community and that will be reprised later in the ritual.

Hitkansut is both a communal ritual and an invitation to explore familial and personal memory. The space should be a comfortable and inviting setting that enables such reflection.

Invitation

We were not there.
 We did not experience or suffer it.
 And yet we take upon ourselves the
responsibility to remember
 And the commitment to *remember responsibly*.
 Even if I have no words and you have few,
 Whether we are faraway or near,
 Whether we are close kin of theirs or distant
 We assemble a place within ourselves,
 among ourselves,
 a meeting place—a convergence of
 memories.
 We are present now.

We were not there, and yet...

Let us **enter** into this gathering to remember the Shoah that annihilated one third of the Jewish people, Six million women, men, and children.

Let us recall the extermination decree
 Against every Jew, wherever they may be,
 Against every human being for being different —
 We are all survivors of the extermination decree.

Let us **remember** the Jewish Communities that were scattered, uprooted, and wiped out, From east to west, from north to south.

Let us **lament** the murdered,
 Light a candle in their memory.
 Let us **confront** evil, for “at the entrance, sin is crouching” then and now,
 And against it let us **honor** and exalt the dedication of those who fought
 In the struggle for human dignity
 Of women, men, and children
 And of the righteous among the nations,
 Let us praise the uprising of the survivors,
 The deported and the uprooted.

And then let us **reflect** and ask ourselves, how should we regard our being here today?
 “In a place where there is no humanity, strive to be human.”

Let us hold out our hands and rise up.
 Let this Gathering be our remembrance and responsibility.



A NOTE ABOUT TEXTS

The texts with gray background throughout this Haggadah serve as the **core texts** and express the central themes of Hitkansut.

The **texts, songs and images** on white background are brought to deepen the experience of Hitkansut.

Participants are invited to select the texts, songs and images that resonate for them as well as to bring their own stories, memories, photos, or songs to share.

Candlelighting at the 2019 Hitkansut Ceremony at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. Noam Feiner/Shalom Hartman Institute

1 *Acheinu* 🎵

As for our kin, the whole house of Israel, who are given over to trouble or captivity, whether they abide on the sea or on the dry land:

May the All-present have mercy upon them, and bring them forth from trouble to well-being, from darkness to light, and from subjugation to redemption, now speedily and at a near time.

אֲחֵינוּ כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, הַנְּתוּנִים בְּצָרָה וּבִשְׁבִיָּה,
הָעוֹמְדִים בֵּין בָּיִם וּבֵין בִּיבְשָׁה, הַמְּקוּם יָרַחֵם עֲלֵיהֶם, וְיוֹצִיאֵם
מִצָּרָה לְרוּחָהּ, וּמֵאֲפֵלָה לְאוֹרָהּ, וּמִשְׁעָבוּד לְגָאֻלָּהּ, הַשְׁתָּא
בְּעִגְלָא וּבְזִמָּן קָרִיב.

*Acheinu kol beit yisrael, han'tunim b'tzara,
b'tzara uvashivyah, haomdim bein bayam uvein
bayabasha. Hamakom y'racheim aleihem v'yotziem
mitzara l'irvacha um'afaila l'orah umishiabud
lig'ulah, hashta ba'agala uvizman kariv.*

Portrait of the Beraha family in the courtyard of their home in Salonika, 1933-34. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Jack Beraha



✿
Acheinu is a song derived from Jewish liturgy.



The Voices of Those Who Remember

Let us remember the generations
who remembered:

In all the Jewish communities who
held prayers, gatherings, and memorials—

Throughout the depths of the Shoah,

And at the end of the war in
displaced persons camps and transit camps,

In the land of Israel,
and in the diasporas.

The tradition of remembering
continues to this very day —

We are a link in the chain.

2 We listen to the survivors' call:

The age of the Holocaust Survivors is drawing to a close. Before long no one will be left to say: "I was there, I saw, I remember what happened." All that will be left will be the books of research and literature, pictures and films and archives of testimonies. This will be a new era. The dark inheritance of the Shoah that was so indelibly stamped on the Survivors souls and hearts will become a historical mission and responsibility imposed upon humanity to fill with content and substance.

— *The Survivors' Declaration, excerpt*

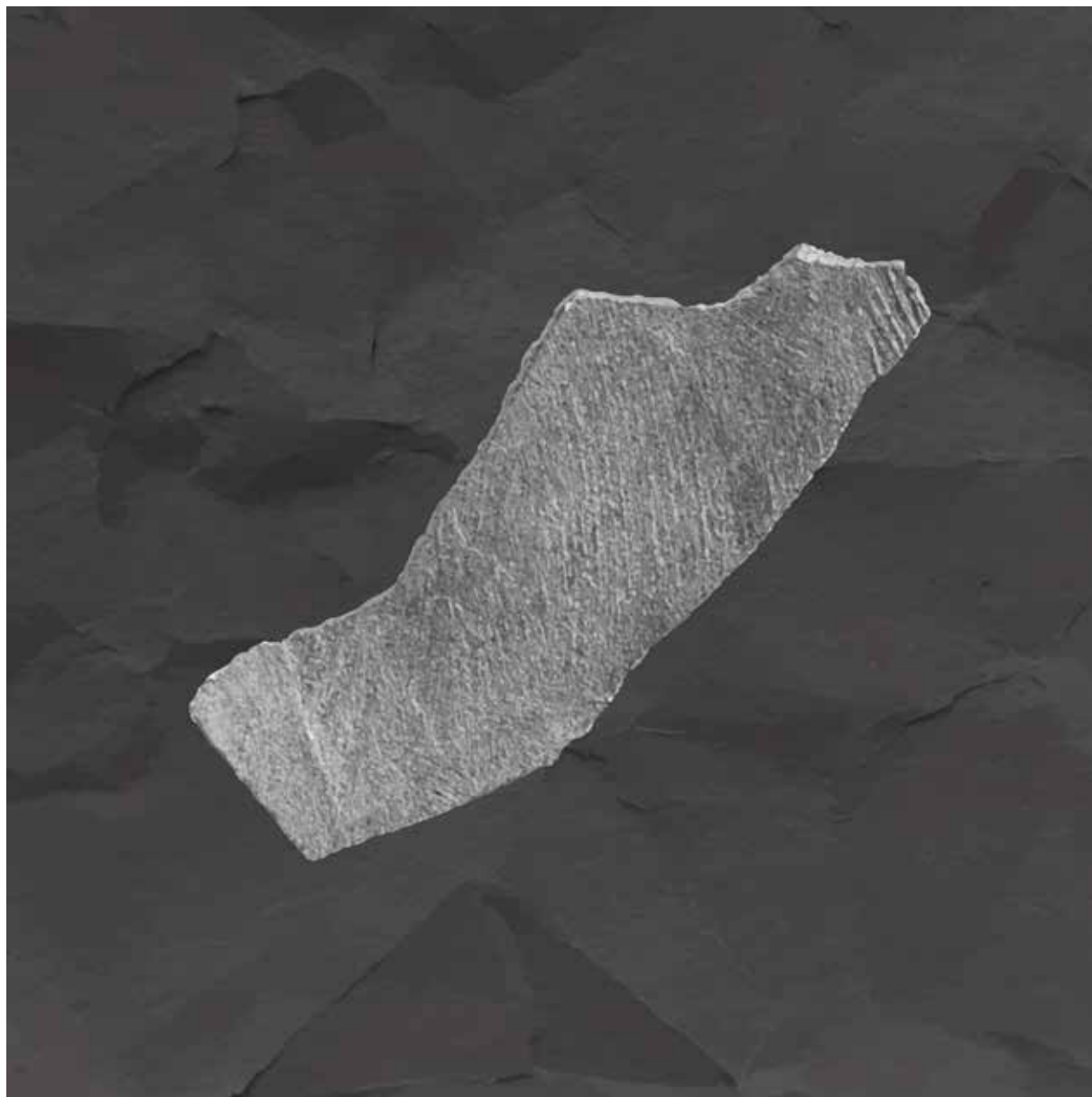
The Survivors' Declaration was composed by Shoah survivors Zvi Gil, Raul Teitelbaum, and Israel Gutman, together with Avner Shalev, the chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate of The Shoah Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. It was first read by Shoah survivor Zvi Gil at the closing ceremony of the International Conference held at Yad Vashem entitled, "Legacy of Shoah Survivors: The Moral and Ethical Implications for Humanity." The ceremony took place in the Valley of the Communities at Yad Vashem on Thursday, April 11, 2002.



This text, an excerpt from "The Survivors' Declaration," is read on behalf of survivors. If a survivor is present, they may wish to read it.



Many survivors committed to bearing witness and recording their testimony. What follows are several such voices. Of course, there are many more and the participants in this ritual can choose which voices to highlight and whether to do so through readings, recordings, or live testimony.



3

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, that turned my life into one long night seven times sealed.

Never shall I forget that smoke.

Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky.

Never shall I forget those flames that consumed my faith forever.

Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence that deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live.

Never shall I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to ashes.

Never shall I forget those things, even were I condemned to live

as long as God Himself.

Never.

—Elie Wiesel, “Never Shall I Forget,” from *Night*

*Elie Wiesel (1928–2016), born in Transylvania, was a writer, professor, and human rights activist. He wrote over sixty books, including his memoir *Night*. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and served on American government commissions on the Shoah.*

4

I lack words, but I am compelled to write, compelled. I want to ask you all not to forget the dead. I want to beg you, asking in every way I know how, to take our revenge.

I want you to leave a mark for us—a headstone as tall as the heavens, a commemoration that the whole world will see—a pillar of neither marble nor stone but of good deeds. I believe with perfect faith that only such a headstone can ensure you and your children a better future.

—*Diary of Donia Rosen, June 23, 1943*

Donia Rosen (1930–2007) was born in Kosov, in Galicia. Her whole family was murdered in the Shoah, and she went into hiding alone in the forest at the age of 12. Donia was saved by Olena Hryhoryshyn, who was eventually named one of the Righteous Among the Nations. She wrote her diary in hiding, using a stub of pencil and scrap of paper that Olena had managed to get her. Donia did not believe she would be saved, and she asked Olena to give her diary to the first Jew she would meet after the war. After the Shoah, Donia immigrated to Israel and ran the department for the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad VaShem until her death in 2007.

5

You who live safe
 In your warm houses,
 You who find, returning in the evening,
 Hot food and friendly faces:
 Consider if this is a man
 Who works in the mud,
 Who does not know peace,
 Who fights for a scrap of bread,
 Who dies because of a yes or a no.
 Consider if this is a woman
 Without hair and without name,
 With no more strength to remember,
 Her eyes empty and her womb cold
 Like a frog in winter.

Meditate that this came about:
 I command these words to you.
 Carve them in your hearts
 At home, in the street,
 Going to bed, rising;
 Repeat them to your children.
 Or may your house fall apart,
 May illness impede you,
 May your children turn their faces
 from you.

—Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man*

*Primo Michele Levi (July 1919–1987) was an Italian Jewish chemist, partisan, Shoah survivor and writer. He was the author of several books, collections of short stories, essays, poems and one novel. His best known works include *If This Is a Man* (1947, published as *Survival in Auschwitz* in the US), his account of the year he spent as a prisoner in the Auschwitz concentration camp.*



We Remember

Life Then

These things I remember, and pour out my soul, how I passed through the throng, and led them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, the celebrating multitude. (Psalms 42:5)

אלה אזכרה ואשפכה עלי נפשי כי אעבר בסף אדם עד־בית אלהים בקול־רנה ותודה המון חוגג: (תהלים מב:ה)



WE REMEMBER

Our gathering honors the dignity of the lives of Jews before the war. We choose not to focus solely on the destruction that followed but to appreciate and celebrate the dignity, beauty, complexity, and creativity of their lives. The lives we remember span countries and continents, vocations and social class, and a range of religious and secular identities.

A selection of texts, songs, and images are offered in the following pages. Participants are invited to bring their own stories, memories, photos, and songs to share instead or as well.

WE REMEMBER | Life Then

Emanuel (Manek) and Stefa Hirsch in Krakow, circa 1933. Stefa was killed in Lvov at the beginning of the war. Manek survived and eventually emigrated to Israel, where he was reunited with his daughter Yanina. Photo courtesy of Yochi Unguru.



1. I Shall Remember

And these too I shall remember.
 The barefoot dream-path,
 Like lightening,
 A joyful flash through the map
 Of my nostalgic sleep,
 The quiet road that brought together
 All the countries, streets, houses
 Into one scared-awake Jewstreet,
 With its warm stones,
 Its moldy wood and somber bricks,
 Accepting my light feet.
 The spice shops,
 The kasha-and-flour stores,
 The herring stands,
 The kerosene vendors, the soapy barbershops,
 The toupee and wig-makers,
 The almonds, dates, and figs,
 The freshly-baked sour-bread
 The poppy-seed and onion rolls,
 The dark tearooms
 With drowsing, black worms
 On their warm fireplace,
 The meager pastures,
 The sleepy, half-alive graveyards,
 Forever watching over
 The frightened life.

—Yankev Glatshiteyn

Yankev Glatshiteyn (1896-1971), also known as Jacob Gladstein, was born in Lublin, Poland. He immigrated to the United States in 1914 and was one of the pre-eminent American Yiddish writers of the twentieth century. His poem "I Shall Remember" was published in 1966.



These Things I Remember

I remember the fathers and the mothers,
 Women, men, and children,
 Speakers of all languages and dialects,
 Who built their lives over hundreds of years —
 Lives of faith and commandments,
 Lives of Torah study,
 Lives of poetry and tradition,
 Lives of song and festive meals,
 Lives of mutual responsibility and aid,
 Lives of finance and work,
 Lives of science and art,
 Lives of societal improvement,
 Lives of creatureliness and creativity,
 Lives of prayer for Zion,
 We remember their Lives —
 They are the pillars of our existence.

The Litman family poses in a boat in prewar Poland. From left to right are Grandmother, Luciek, Unknown, Grandfather, Olga Litman (middle), Klara Kautzr, and Isaac Litman (far right), August 27, 1933. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Provenance: Halina Peabody

2 Marc Warshawsky, “Oyfn Pripetchik” 🎵

WE REMEMBER | Life Then

Oyfn pripetchik brent a fayerl,
Un in shtub iz heys,
Un der rebe lernt kleyne kinderlekh,
Dem alef-beys.

Zet zhe kinderlekh, gedenkt zhe, tayere,
Vos ir lernt do;
Zogt zhe nokh a mol un take nokh a mol:
Komets-alef: o!

Lernt, kinder, mit groys kheyshek,
Azoy zog ikh aykh on;
Ver s'vet gikher fun aykh kenen ivre -
Der bakumt a fon.

Lernt, kinder, hot nit moyre,
Yeder onheyb iz shver;
Gliklekh der vos hot gelernt toyre,
Tsi darf der mentsh nokh mer?

Ir vet, kinder, elter vern,
Vet ir aley n farshteyn,
Vifl in di oysyes lign trern,
Un vi fil geveyn.

Az ir vet, kinder, dem goles shlep n,
Oysgemutshet zayn,
Zolt ir fun di oysyes koyekh shepn,
Kukt in zey arayn!

אויפֿן פֿריפעטשיק ברענט פֿײַערל,
און אין שטוב איז הייס.
און דער רבי לערנט קליינע קינדערלעך
דעם אַלף-בייט.

זעט זשע, קינדערלעך, געדענקט זשע, טײַערע,
וואָס איר לערנט דאָ,
זאָגט זשע נאָך אַ מאָל און טאַקע נאָך אַ מאָל:
קמץ-אַלף – אָ!

לערנט, קינדער, מיט גרויס חשק,
אַזוי זאָג איך אייך אָן,
ווער ס'וועט גיכער פון אייך קענען עבֿרן,
דער באַקומט אַ פֿאָן.

לערנט, קינדער, האט נישט מורא,
יעדער אנהייב איז שווער;
גליקלעך דער וואס האט געלערנט תורה,
צו דארף א מענטש נאך מער?

אַז איר וועט, קינדער, עלטער ווערן,
וועט איר אַליין פֿאַרשטיין,
וויפֿל אין די אותיות ליגן טרענן,
און ווי פֿיל געוויין.

אַז איר וועט, קינדער, דעם גלות שלעפֿן,
אויסגעמוטשעט זיין,
זאָלט איר פֿון די אותיות כוח שעפֿן,
קוקט אין זיי אַריין

On the hearth, a fire burns,
And in the house it is warm.
And the rabbi is teaching little children,
The alphabet.

See, children, remember, dear ones,
What you learn here;
Repeat and repeat yet again,
“Komets-alef: o!”

Learn, children, with great enthusiasm.
So I instruct you;
He who learns Hebrew pronunciation faster —
He will receive a flag.

Learn children, don't be afraid,
Every beginning is hard;
Lucky is the one who has learned Torah,
What more does a person need?

When you grow older, children,
You will understand by yourselves,
How many tears lie in these letters,
And how much lament.

When you, children, will bear the Exile,
And will be exhausted,
May you derive strength from these letters,
Look in at them!

Marc Warshawsky (1848-1907), born in Odessa, was a Yiddish language folk-poet and composer. His works, such as Oyfn Pripetchik, gained popularity in the Jewish community of the Ukrainian region of the Russian Empire.



3 “Arum Dem Fayer” 🎵

Arum dem fayer
 Mir zingen lider
 Di nakht iz tayer
 Men vert nit mider
 Un zol dos fayer
 Farloshn vern,
 Shaynt oyf der himl
 Mit zayne shtern
 To kroynt di kep
 Mit blumen-kranstn
 Arum dem fayer
 Mir freylekh tantsn
 Vayl tants un lider
 Iz undzer lebn,
 Dernokh in shlof
 Khaloymes shvebn.

אַרום דעם פֿײַער
 מיר זינגען לידער
 די נאַכט איז טײַער
 מען ווערט ניט מידער
 און זאָל דאָס פֿײַער
 פֿאַרלאָשן ווערן,
 שײַנט אויף דער הימל,
 מיט זײַנע שטערן.
 טאָ קרױנט די קעפּ
 מיט בלומען-קראַנסן
 אַרום דעם פֿײַער
 מיר פֿרײַלעך טאַנצן
 ווײַל טאַנצן און לידער
 איז אונדזער לעבן,
 דערנאָך אין שלאָף
 חלומות שוועבן.



A NOTE ABOUT SONGS

Participants may know songs from their families they wish to teach or sing. Recordings of songs, easily found online, as well as the lyrics and transliterations offer the opportunity to just listen or sing along.

Around the campfire / We sing songs
 The night is sweet / We don't get tired
 And if this fire / Goes out
 The heavens shine / With their stars
 So crown our heads / With flower garlands
 Around the fire / We dance happily
 Since dance and songs / Are our life
 And then in sleep / Dreams will glide.

Masza Swislocki (back, left) retrieved this charred photo, along with other belongings, from her home in Warsaw after it was destroyed during the German bombing. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Norbert Swislocki

4 Mordkhe Gebirtig, “Motele” — A Song of Learning 🎵

I. Vos vet der sof zayn, Motl, zog-zhe mir:
Bist erger nokh fun frier gevorn.
Baklogt hot zikh der rebe haynt oyf dir,
Az du dergeyst im zayne yorn.
Siz nisht genug du vilst nisht lernen gor,
Dem rebn nebech tustu dertsernen
Shlogt zikh arum un shpilst zikh nor,
Un shterst di kinderlekh dos lernen.

II. Nisht emes, Tate, vos der rebe zogt.
A shlekhte mentsh, nito zayn glaykhn.
Farvos dertseylt er nisht vi er undz shlogt—
Ze tatenyu, dem bloyen tseychn.
khob mit Avremln zikh tsevertlt bloyz,
Er hot mayn khumishl tserishn,
Derfar hot undz der rebe oyf zayn shoys,
Nokh mit a nigindl geshmishn.

III. Vos vet der sof zayn, Motl, entfey droyf,
Di shkheynim zogn, ikh muz zey gloybn.
Du yogst zikh gantse teg arum in hoyf,
Un khaverst zikh mit yanek's toybn.
Tsi iz dos sheyn far yidn, zog aleyn,
Mit toybn zei arumtsuyogn?
Host nekhtn, Motl, vider mit a shteyn,
Dem shoykhn shoybn oysegeshlogn?

IV. Nisht emes, tate, siz koym aroys.
shtikl shoyb, men ken es tsuklepn.
Ikh yog zikh nisht un kuk zikh tsu nor
bloyz
Vi sheyn di taybeleh zey shvebn
Vi fray zey shpringen zikh arum in hoyf,
Vi sheyn di kerndlekh zey pikn,
Vi shnel zey gibn zikh a loz aroyf,
Ven zey a fremde toyb derblikn.

V. Vos vet der sof zayn, motl, ikh freg
dikh nor,
A groyser yung, kneynehore,
Ven ikh bin gevezn draytsn yor,
Gekent vi vaser di gemore,
A yid muz lernen toyre mit groys freyd,
Nisht hobn narishkeyt in zinen-
Az voyl dem mentsh- voz iz tsu got, tsu layt
Vos ken gut lernen un gelt fardinen.

VI. Der zeyde hot amol dertseylt fun dir,
Flegst oykh nokh taybeleh zikh yogt.
Biz oykh fil beser nisht geven fun mir,
Dayn rebe hot dikh oykh geshlogn.
Haynt kenstu lernen un host gelt dertsu.
Hob tatenyu far mir keyn moyre,
Ven ikh vel vern groys, vel ikh vi du,
Fardinen gelt un lernen Toyre.

נישט אמת, טאטע, ס'איז נאָר קוים אַרויס
אַ שטיקל שויב, מען קענ'ס צוקלעפן.
איך יאָג זיך נישט, איך קוק זיך צו נאָר בלויז,
ווי שיין די טייבעלעך זיך שוועבן,
ווי פֿריי זיי שפּרינגען זיך אַרום אין הויף,
ווי שיין די קערנדלעך זי יפּיקן,
ווי שנעל זיי פֿרעמדע טויב דערבליקן.

וואָס וועט דער סוף זיין מאַטל, כ'פֿרעג דיך
נאָר?

אַ גרויסער יונג, קיין עין-הרע.
ווען איך בין אַלט געוועזן דרייצן יאָר,
געקענט ווי וואָסער די גמרא,
אַ ייד מוז לערנען תורה מיט גרויס פֿפּרייד,
נישט האָבן נאָאָרישקייט אין זינען ---
פֿו וויל דעם מענטש, וואָס איז צו גאָט, צו לייט,
וואָס קען גוט לערנען און געלט פֿאַרדינען.

דער זיידע האָט אַ מאָל דערציילט פֿון דיר,
פֿלעגסט אויך נאָך טייבעלעך זיך יאָגן,
ביסט אויך פֿיל בעסער נישט געווען פֿון מיר,
דיין רבי האָט דיך אויך געשלאָגן.
היינט קענסטו לערנען און האָסט געלט דערצו
האָב טאָטעניו, פֿאַר מיר קיין מורא,
ווען איך וועל ווערן גרויס, וועל איך, ווי דו,
פֿאַרדינען געלט און לערנען תורה.

וואָס וועט דער סוף זיין מאָטל זאָג זשע מיר?
ביסט ערגער נאָך פֿון פֿרוער געוואָרן,
באַקלאָגט האָט זיך דער רבי היינט אויף דיר,
אַז דו דערגייסט אים זיינע יאָרן.
ס'איז נישט גענוג דו ווילסט נישט לערנען גאָר,
דעם רבין געבכך טוסט דערצערנען,
שלאָסטו זיך אַרום און שפּילסט זיך נאָר,
און שטערסט די קינדערלעך דאָס לערנען?

נישט אמת, טאָטע, וואָס דער רבי זאָגט,
אַ שלעכטער מענטש, נישטאַ זיין גלייכן,
פֿאַר וואָס דערציילט ער נישט, ווי ער אונדז
שלאָגט,
זע, טאָטעניו, דעם בלאָען צייכן.
כ'האָב מיט אַבֿרהאַמלען זיך צעווערטלט בלויז,
ער האָט מײַן חומשל צעריסן,
דערפֿאַר האָט אונדז דער רבי אויף זיין שוים
נאָך מיט אַ ניגונדל געשמיסן.

וואָס וועט דער סוף זיין, מאָטל? ענטפֿער
ד'רויף:
די שכנים זאָגן, כ'מוז זיי גלייבן,
דו יאָגסט זיך גאַנצע טעג אַרום אין חוץ,
און חבֿרסט זיך מיט יאָנעקס טויבן, ---
צי איז דאָס שײַן פֿאַר יודן, זאָג אַליין,
מיט טויבן זיך אַרומצויאָגן?
האָסט געכטן מאָטל ווידער מיט אַ שטיין
דעם שכנס שויבן אויסגשלאָגן?

“What will be with you, Motl,
tell me. It’s not enough that you have no
interest whatsoever in learning but you have
to bother the Rebbe. I hear you’re hitting
other kids, Motl, and disturbing the other
ones from learning.”

“Not true, Tati, not true what the Rebbe says.
A bad man, no credentials.
Why doesn’t he tell you how he hits us? Just
take a look at my black and blue? It was a
tiny fight between Avreml and me, he tore my
Chumash and that’s why the Rebbe hit us.”

“Motl, what will be with you?
The neighbors are talking, I must believe
them. They say you’re running around,
chasing Janek’s pigeons. Now you tell me,
is that the proper thing for a pious Jew to
do? To waste his time chasing pigeons? Motl,
tell me the truth, yesterday, did you break a
neighbor’s window with a stone?”

“Not true, Tati. Only a little piece of the
windowpane was broken—and can be
easily fixed. I do not fool around, just
observe, how beautifully the pigeons fly, how
happy they hop at the courtyards, how prettily
they peck, and suddenly rise and fly away,
to join another pigeon in the sky.”

“Motl, Motl, what will become of you?
Answer me! You’re a grown boy now,
you know. When I was your age, at 13 I knew
the Gemara by heart. A Jew must study the
Torah with great joy, and not have foolishness
in mind. Happy is he, who excels before God
and man, who studies well and earns his living.”

“Zeyde once told me about you.
That you too also chased pigeons.
That you were not all that much better than
me—that your Rebbe also gave you a whipping.
But now, you’re learned and have security,
so Tati, don’t have such fear.
When I’m grown up, I’ll be just like you,
I’ll earn a living and study Torah.”

*Mordkhe Gebirtig (1877-1942) was a Yiddish poet
and songwriter who lived in Krakow. His music was
popular in the 1920s and 1930s. As World War II
approached, his music continued to communicate
hope even in darker times. Gebirtig perished on
June 4, 1942.*

5 A Child's Munich

We lived near one of the main theaters in Munich. Down the street, there was the Isar river that flows through Munich. It was a wonderful place to walk and to play. ... Maybe that's how I got my love of water. I love the water and ocean.

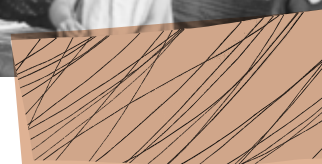
Across the river, there was a museum. Every so often, we went to the museum. It was one of my favorite places, and just across the bridge from our street.

...We had one special guard there that showed us around, or if something new came, and we always bought him an orange or an apple.

I had three cousins, and we kids went together. Two were a little older, and one was three days younger. We kids went together.

Thea Obarzanek Aschkenase was born in Munich, Germany on October 14, 1923. She survived the Shoah in camps in Germany and Italy, and finally, Auschwitz. She later settled in Worcester, Massachusetts. This excerpt comes from her testimony for the USC Shoah Foundation.

Young children study in a classroom at a Jewish school in Kassel, Germany in 1938, during the Third Reich. Among those pictured are: the teacher Willi Katz, Dorrih Oppenheim (far left) and Heinz Westheim (fifth horizontal row from the front, right side). © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Dorrih Oppenheim Sim



6 *Malke Roche's Schneider of Eishyshok*

My mother-in-law, may she rest in peace, was a young, beautiful woman, real gorgeous, a divorcee. Though she wore a filthy apron, stained with kerosene, pitch tar, and lubricant grease that smelled from a distance, it did not detract from her beauty. She owned a store that appeared small from the outside, but was well stocked. There were sacks of flour, a few pud sugar, raisins, barrels of herring...There was plenty of everything, and she bought all for cash, for she did not suffer from lack of business, but was popular with Jews and Christians alike.

...

[M]y mother-in-law was religious. She always kept her head covered with a tzipeck, trimmed with lace and tied with two white ties – a true kosher Jewish woman! Everyone loved her.

...

She got up every weekday at three to open her store for her early-bird customers, the Jews who prayed at the vatikin [the dawn quorum]. ... She also closed later than all the other shopkeepers.

All week she looked filthy, but came the Sabbath and the holidays, and she dressed up in her shaitl [wig] and the beautiful black dress she made for her wedding, on top of which she wore a short velvet coat. Then the weekday shopkeeper looked like a princess.

*This reflection was written by Malke Roche's daughter's husband, Mordekhai Munesh Kaleko. Yaffa Eliach included this reflection in her book *There Once Was a World: A 900-Year Chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok*. This Polish village was witness to a changing Eastern Europe. Nearly every one of the 3,500 Jews who lived in Eishyshok died in the Shoah.*



Participants here are invited to share their family names, as well as the names and places of origin throughout the world of their families/ancestors.



I Will Remember

I will remember the Jews in their diasporas,
In their communities,
From East to West.
In Europe, on the shores of the Mediterranean, and
throughout the Middle East,
Those who were destroyed or displaced.
And I will remember the Jewish communities
That stood beside their brethren
In the days of destruction.

Children playing on a street in the Jewish quarter of Paris before the Shoah. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park



We Lament

Elegy

Over these I weep. My eye, my eye sheds tears; for consolation is far from me. (Lamentations 1:16)

על־אלה אני בוכה. עיני, עיני ירדה מים; כִּירַחַק מִמֶּנִּי מְנוּחָם מְשִׁיב נַפְשִׁי. (איכה א:טז)



WE LAMENT

We mourn our indescribable collective and personal losses through song, readings, personal memories, and prayer.



This section may begin with the singing of a wordless melody (niggun).



*Two young brothers, seated for a family photograph in the Kovno ghetto. One month later, they were deported to the Majdanek camp. Kovno, Lithuania, February 1944.
© United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Shraga Wainer*

For All These Things I Weep...

Even if I have no words and you have few,
Our reach falling short and our language stammering,
We awaken the memory of an ocean of indescribable
torments, mankind's most enormous slaughter,
With the very muteness of our lips and with a sadness that
transcends language.

For these things I weep:

For the parents who were murdered,
For the brothers, the sisters,
For the children who dreamed.

For these things I weep:

For the house that was destroyed,
For the neighbors who betrayed,
For the street from which they were driven,
For the synagogues that were shattered,
For the whole nation whose life was crushed.

For these things I weep,

For each person, their world, and their mystery,
For their loves, their despairs, and their dreams,
For their study, their deeds, and their pains,
For their memories, their anger, and their laughter,
For each person and their life.



1 Six Million

Question: “How many were killed?”

Answer: “Six million.”

Question: “Is that a lot?”

Answer: “Yes, it is a lot.”

But here is a different answer:

“Imagine that every word in the Torah represents the name of a Jew killed in the Holocaust. As opposed to the Torah which Jews traditionally read from beginning to end over the course of each year, this Torah scroll full of holy names would take seventy-five years to read.”

Yet another answer:

“Imagine a line of people each standing a meter apart. The line begins in Jerusalem, descends toward the orchards in the Sharon region, reaches the sea, continues into the water, past Cyprus and Crete and the area of Peloponnese, cuts across ancient Greece, and reenters the water on the other side by Ancient Rome. This unending line of Jews young and old, each standing one meter apart, now turns northward and crosses the Alps until it reaches what was once the German Reich where—still cramped and twisting—it finds itself at the gates of Auschwitz. From there—unbelievably—the line veers through a Europe muddied with bloody footprints and continues all the way back to Jerusalem—the circle of people is complete. Their number: six million.”

— *Shlomo Breznitz*, *The Holocaust – Anthropocalypse: Vicissitudes of the Memory of the Murderers in Remembering the Holocaust*

Shlomo (Yorai) Breznitz was born in 1936 in Slovakia. He is a professor of psychology at the University of Haifa and was formerly a Member of Knesset, Israel's Parliament. When he was eight years old, Slovakia was conquered by the Nazis, and his parents sent him to a monastery to try to save his life. The monks protected him for the sake of his incredible memory which enabled him to recite Christian prayers by heart.

2 Éva, Age 13

“Dear diary, we have been here for five days, but it feels like five years. I don’t know where to start, because so many awful things have happened since the last time I wrote in you. First of all, they finished building the wall, so no one can go in or out. Starting today, dearest diary, we don’t live in the ghetto. We live in the ghetto-camp. They hung signs on every house detailing exactly what we are forbidden to do. Really, everything is forbidden, but the real problem is that the punishment listed for every violation is death. It doesn’t say if this punishment applies to children too, but I assume that it does indeed apply to us.”

—Éva Heyman, *diary, excerpt*

In her diary, Éva Heyman (1931–1944) described her life in the months before the slaughter of the Jews of Nagyvárád, Hungary. With the closing of the ghetto and the imprisoning of all the Jews of the city, Éva was sent to Auschwitz, where she was murdered.



A survivor, or either child or grandchild of survivors may be invited to share their testimony. Participants may choose in addition or instead to read a testimonial such as those included here.



3 Not a Word

The truth came slowly and in fragments. One of the relatives in New York remembers a group from Rakov coming to the house on Andrews Avenue with a list of names of landsmen who had been killed and asking Shalom Tvi whether he could identify any of them. But there is no mention of this visit in the letters Shalom Tvi wrote faithfully, fanatically to Sonia every week in 1944 and 1945. From these letters it is clear that he never received definitive confirmation of the deaths, the synagogue fire, the actions at Volozhin, the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto, the pyres at Klooga in which his grandson perished. In the absence of news, he was left to conclude the worst.

In The Family, David Laskin captures the relationship between the branches of his family originating in Rakov, Belarus. Shalom Tvi Kaganovich, the author's great-great uncle, found himself unable to return to Rakov after visiting family in America in the summer of 1939, which saved his life. Shalom Tvi lost his wife, daughters, son-in-law, grandchildren, a sister, a brother, and nieces and nephews in the Shoah.

4 Jacob, Age 17

First, we had to take off all of our clothes. The clothes were thrown to one side, while our shoes were put in a separate pile. We entered the next room naked as the day we were born. That is where they gave us our number. The Lagerführer, the head of the concentration camp, told us: "Starting today you are all just numbers. You have no names. You have no identities. You have no homeland. All you have is a number. Except for this number, you have nothing."

—Jacob, "Starting Today You Have No Name"

5 Hayun Hayun

They gathered all the Jews and took them to the area around Giado, which was over one thousand kilometers away from us. We traveled in trucks packed so tight that there was no more room. The trip took a full week. No one wanted to run, because where do you run to in the desert? There were Germans and Italians guarding us. When we got there, the first thing they did was D.D.T. us. They put us in there totally naked. To us, this was disgraceful, a child being put naked next to his father, and seeing his father naked. There were barracks like in an army camp, and they put the people there. Based on size, each family got a certain amount of centimeters. There was a blanket between each family, and there were four columns. There was great hunger. Hygiene was less than nothing. There were terrible diseases. Death was better than life.

—Hayun Hayun, testimony

Hayun Hayun was born in 1933 in the city of Derna in Libya. In May, 1942, when he was nine, Hayun and his family, along with 2,600 other Jews from the area, were sent to Giado, a camp created in Libya under Nazi control. Hayun lived under Italian control in the camp until January 1943 and remained in the camp for rehabilitation for a few months after it was captured by the British army. In 1949, he immigrated to Israel. He described the harsh experiences of the Jews in the camp in his testimony, given at Yad Vashem in 1995.



Westerbork, Holland, Jews boarding a deportation train to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Extermination Camp. © Yad Vashem Photo Archive, Jerusalem. FA29/57.



Jewish men and boys from Subcarpathian Rus await selection on the ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The man in the center wearing glasses is Sigmund Bruck, a mechanical engineer from Tab. Bruck was denounced as a communist, arrested and deported to Nagy Kamizsa. He was eventually sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau and then to Gleiwitz, where he was killed by a guard during an escape attempt. To his left is Mr. Smilazick and his son. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Yad Vashem

6 Zalmen Gradowski

Dear reader, I write these words in the moment of my greatest despair. ... I pass on to you only a small part of what took place.

Soon we would bear witness. With our own eyes, we would have to watch our own destruction, as five thousand Jews, five thousand vibrant, thriving souls, women and children, young and old, would pass under the truncheons of civilized brutes. At the authorities' disposal would be rifles, grenades and automatics, as well as their vicious dogs; these would chase and savagely attack the Jews, who distracted and confused, would run blindly into the arms of death.

And we, their own brothers, would have to help with this, help unload them from the trucks and lead them to the bunkers, help strip them mother-naked. And then, when all was ready, accompany them to the bunker—to the grave.

—Zalmen Gradowski, diary, excerpt, March-April 1944

Zalmen Gradowski (1910-1944) lived in Suwalki and Lunna, Poland. Along with the Jews of his and other neighboring communities, he was deported to the Kielbasin transit camp on November 2, 1942, and was sent to Auschwitz on December 5, 1942. He was enslaved as a Sonderkommando—forced to dispose of gas chamber victims—and worked in the crematoria of Auschwitz. He buried a secret diary of his experiences in Auschwitz before his death in the Sonderkommando revolt of October 7, 1944.

7 Dan Pagis, “Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway-Car”

here in this carload
i am eve
with abel my son
if you see my other son
cain son of man
tell him that i

כָּאן בַּמְשָׁלוּחַ הַזֶּה
אֲנִי חַוָּה
עִם הָבֵל בְּנִי
אִם תִּרְאוּ אֶת בְּנֵי הַגָּדוֹל
קִיּוֹן בֶּן אָדָם
תִּגִּידוּ לוֹ שְׁאֲנִי

Dan Pagis (1930–1986) was a poet, translator, and researcher of medieval poetry. He was born in Romanian Rădăuți, and at age 11 he was taken with his grandparents on a death march to the work camps in Transnistria. Most of those marching did not survive. Pagis immigrated to Israel after the Shoah. He published six collections of poetry as well as scholarly works.



Auschwitz Birkenau



This poem ends where it begins. It is powerful to ask three participants to take turns reading it in a row continuously without pause.





Each participant may light a memorial candle on a table of candles and recite names of loved ones, if any, or names of others who perished in the Shoah.

The passage “I Remember Them” may be helpful for participants who may not fully know the history of their family during the Shoah.

Participants may choose to recite one of the following readings (or substitute another) for Yizkor.

8 El Malei Rachamim — Memorial Prayer

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת כנפיה
השכינה, במעלות קדושים וטהורים כזוהר הרקיע מזהירים את
נשמות כל אחינו בית ישראל שנסבחו בשואה, אנשים נשים
וילדים, שנהנקו ונשקרו וננהגו, שמסרו את נפשם על קדוש
השם, בגן עדן תהא מנוחתם. אנא בעל הרחמים הסתירם
בסתר כנפיד לעולמים, וצורר בצרור החיים את נשמותיהם, ה'
הוא נחלתם, וינוחו בשלום על משכבותיהם, ונאמר אמן

*El malei rachamim, shochen bamromim, hamtzei
menucha nechona tachat kanfei hashechina,
b'ma'alot kedoshim ut'horim k'zohar harakiya
mazhirim et nishmot kol acheinu beit yisrael
she'nitbechu baShoah, anashim nashim ve'taf,
she'nechneku v'she'nisrefu v'she'nehergu, she'masru
et nafsham al kiddush hashem. B'gan Eiden
te'hey menuchatam. Ana ba'al harachamim
has'tireim be'seiter kenafecha le'olamim. Utz'ror
bitzror ha'chayim et nishmoteihem, Adonai
hu nachalatam, ve'yanuchu be'shalom al
mishkevotchem, ve'nomar amen.*

God, full of mercy
You who dwell in the heights,
Shelter them beneath the wings of Your presence
high among the holy and the pure, who shine like
the brilliant heavens.
Shelter them —

shelter the souls of our sisters and brothers of the
house of Israel
who were slaughtered in the Shoah,
small children, women, men:
strangled, suffocated, burned to ash.
They revered Your name;
Their souls passed into Your care.
Let Eden be their resting place.
Master of Mercy,
Drape them and keep them forever
in Your protecting presence.
Bind their souls to the living and to life.
God, You are their inheritance;
Where they rest, ease them with peace.
And we say: “Amen.”

—Rabbi Amy Loewenthal

9 I Remember Them

In the 1930s and 40s my Grandpa, Morris Goldberg, who worked as a food salesman, would send money to family in Eastern Europe and would receive letters of thanks. And then, one month, the letters stopped coming. This is all I know. I don't know their names, who they were, how they lived.

I wonder which of my features, likes and dislikes, gifts and challenges I might have inherited from them. I am grateful to them for being part of the chain of inheritance that produced my own children. Despite not knowing them, I feel indebted to them. I remember them.

— Rachel Jacoby Rosenfield

Rachel Jacoby Rosenfield is the Executive Vice President of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America and a member of the North American Hitkansut Design Team.

*Charleroi, Belgium,
Children Samuel
and Abraham
Fligelman who
perished in
Auschwitz in 1942.
© Yad Vashem
Photo Archive,
Jerusalem. 6830/2*



10 Kaddish

Words: Z. Segalovitch

Music: Ben Yomen

*Vifl zaynen shoyen nito
Zol geheylikt zayn di sho
Mir baveyenen zey on rash,
-Yisgadal v'yiskadash.*

וויפל זיינען שוין ניטאָ
זאל געהייליקט זיין די שעה
מיר באַוויינען זיי אָן רעש
—יתגדל ויתקדש...

How many are no longer here,
May the hour be hallowed.
We remember them without end.
—Yisgadal...

*Vos farblibn iz undz mer,
Vi di durkhgeglite trer,
Af di kvorim, af dem ash.
—Yisgadal v'yiskadash...*

וואָס פאַרבליבן אין אונדז מער
ווי די דורכגעגליטע טרער
אויף די קברים, אויף דעם אַש
—יתגדל ויתקדש...

What's left of us
Like a wrung out tear,
Over the graves, over the ash.
—Yisgadal...

11 Yizkor – Memorial Prayer

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת נַשְׁמוֹת אֲחֵינוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, חֲלָלֵי הַשּׁוֹאָה וְגִבּוֹרֶיהָ, נַשְׁמוֹת שֵׁשׁ-
מֵאוֹת רִבְבוֹת אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁהוּמָתוּ וְשֶׁנֶּהְרְגוּ וְשֶׁנֶּחְנְקוּ וְשֶׁנִּקְבְּרוּ חַיִּים, וְאֶת
קְהֵלוֹת הַקֹּדֶשׁ שֶׁנֶּחְרְבוּ עַל קִדְשַׁת הַשֵּׁם.
יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת עַקְדָּתָם עִם עַקְדַּת שְׂאֵר קְדוּשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגִבּוֹרֵיו מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם וַיִּצְרָר
בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים אֶת נַשְׁמָתָם. הַנִּצָּהֲבִים וְהַנִּעְמִימִים בְּחַיֵּיהֶם וּבְמוֹתָם לֹא נִפְרְדוּ. יָנוּחוּ
בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל מִשְׁכְּבוֹתָם וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

*Yizkor Elohim et nishmot acheinu b'nei yisrael, hal'lei HaShoah
ve'gibore'ha, nishmot sheish-mei'ot rivevot alfei yisrael,
she'hum'tu ve'she'nehergu ve'she'nikberu chayim, ve'et kehilot
hakodesh she'nech'revu al kedushat hashem.*

*Yizkor Elohim et akeidatam im akeidat she'ar kedoshei
Yisrael ve'giborav mimei olam ve'yitzror bitzror hachayim
et nishmatam. Ha'ne'eh'havim ve'ha'ne'imim be'chayeiheim
uvmotam lo nifra'du. Yanuchu be'shalom al mishkevotam
venomar amen.*

Let God remember
The souls of our kin, Children of Israel,
Those victims and heroes of the Shoah
The souls of the six million
Who were killed and slaughtered and strangled and buried alive,
And the holy communities who were destroyed.

Let God remember
The sacrifice of
The rest of the holy ones of Israel
And its eternal heroes,
Lovely and beloved
In their lifetimes, and unlost in their deaths.
Let them rest in peace in their repose,
And let us say, Amen.



The Lamentation section
may end with a moment of
silence in memory of those
lost in the Shoah.

We Confront

Evil

And you shall root out evil from your midst; And those who remain will listen and be afraid, and such evil will not again be done in your midst. (Deuteronomy 19:19-20)

וּבַעֲרַתְּ הָרָע מִקִּרְבְּךָ: וְהַנִּשְׁאָרִים יִשְׁמְעוּ וְיִרְאוּ וְלֹא־יִסְכּוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת עוֹד כַּדָּבָר הָרָע הַזֶּה בְּקִרְבְּךָ: (דברים יט:יט-כ)

We shall gaze directly into the abyss of human evil, then and now.



WE CONFRONT

In this section, we confront the challenge of the human capacity to do evil. Let us reflect on the evil perpetrated during the Shoah and how this obligates us.

Participants may choose several texts from those that follow that explore the evil, hatred, and abuse of power during the Shoah.

Texts can be read in unison, to oneself, responsively or out loud by one or multiple voices.



1. Dan Pagis, “Testimony”

No no: they definitely were
human beings: uniforms, boots.
How to explain? They were
created in the image.

I was a shade.
A different creator made me.

And he in his mercy left
nothing of me that would die.
And I fled to him, rose
weightless, blue,
forgiving — I would even say:
apologizing —
smoke to omnipotent smoke
without image or likeness.

Dan Pagis (1930–1986) was a poet, translator, and researcher of medieval poetry. He was born in Romanian Rădăuți, and at age 11 he was taken with his grandparents on a death march to the work camps in Transnistria. Most of those marching did not survive. Pagis immigrated to Israel after the Shoah. He published six collections of poetry as well as scholarly works.

לא לא: הם בְּהֶחֱלֵט
הָיוּ בְּנֵי-אָדָם: מִדִּים, מִנִּפִּים.
אֵיךְ לְהַסְבִּיר. הֵם נִבְרָאוּ בְּצֶלֶם.

אֲנִי הָיִיתִי צֶלֶל.
לִי הָיָה בּוֹרֵא אֲחֵר.

וְהוּא בְּחַסְדּוֹ לֹא הִשְׁאִיר בִּי מָה שְׂיָמוּת.
וּבְרַחֲמָי אֵלָיו, עָלִיתִי קָלִיל, כָּחֹל
מִפֶּיֶס, הָיִיתִי אוֹמֵר: מִתְנַצֵּל
עָשָׂן אֶל עָשָׂן כֹּל יָכוֹל
שָׂאִין לוֹ גּוֹף וְדַמוּת

2 The 1936 Olympic Games

“Neither Americans nor the representatives of other countries can take part in the Games in Nazi Germany without at least acquiescing in the contempt of the Nazis for fair play and their sordid exploitation of the Games.”

—Ernest Lee Jahncke, American member of the International Olympic Committee, in a letter to Count Henri Baillet-Latour, President of the IOC, November 25, 1935

The 1936 Olympic Games held in Germany were controversial throughout the world. Debate amongst the American Olympic committee and throughout the country's citizens was intense. Some called for the American withdrawal from the Games, while others argued that Germany's status under Hitler's leadership was a political consideration that had no place in the games. Newspapers and media were filled with calls to action and reminders that Hitler's mission of imperialism and destruction of the Jewish world should be front of mind, above sports and entertainment.



A cartoon titled “The Paradox”, in The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, August 3, 1936. It shows Olympics and Nazi flags flying over a sports stadium, Reprinted with permission of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle.

3 Facing Evil

Can it be that, despite its noble intentions, the Auschwitz Museum is essentially a memorial to the Genius of Evil? On the tour, I felt I was part of a crowd rushing to see the traditional “attractions”—the hellishness, the torture chambers, and the horror shows found in amusement parks. The culture of horror shows still attracts crowds even after Auschwitz, after Rwanda and Darfur, and also after September 11, like a violent horror show disseminated on the web. God did not establish Auschwitz nor did Satan create it. Mortals constructed Auschwitz and human beings were tortured there to death. In the camps, man was revealed, in his depths and his heights.

—Adapted from Michal Govrin,
“Where Are the Individual Voices?” and “Facing Evil”

Michal Govrin (born in 1950) is a writer, poet, and theater director. Her father was part of the Third Aliyah. Michal's mother, a survivor of the death camps, lost both her first husband and her son in the Shoah.

We will remember the power of
evil to spread terror, then and
now; its ability to disguise itself
and slip into our souls, with or
without our knowledge.

4 *Teacher and Child*

On the first day of the new school year, all the teachers received the following note from their principal:

Dear Teacher:

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:

Gas chambers built by learned engineers.
Children poisoned by educated physicians.
Infants killed by trained nurses.
Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.

So, I am suspicious of education. My request is: help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns.

Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane.

—Haim Ginott, *Teacher and Child*

Haim Ginott (1922-1973) was born in Israel and moved to the United States in the 1940s. He was a teacher of young children, a professor of child psychology and psychotherapy, and an author of three books, including Between Parent and Child and Teacher and Child. His well-regarded approach to parenting and teaching is still used today.

5 *Liberating Buchenwald*

We headed for the woods talking softly to each other, the talk full of wonderment—the hows, the whys. We had no answers. As limited as our combat experience had been, we had seen dead men, we had seen wounded men from both sides with the immediacy of battle, with no time for conjecture. We had done what we could for the wounded and then had got on with the job that had to be done.

None of us, no one in our company, even amongst those who had been the originals, was prepared for what we were now surrounded by. It was not “human”. It did not seem real. But it was all too real, it was the only life that some of the prisoners had known for years. Maybe it was all too human. Maybe this is what we are.

—Harry J. Herder, Jr., *A Catharsis*

Harry J. Herder, Jr. (1925-2009) was a soldier of the Fifth Ranger Battalion with Patton's Third Army, which liberated Buchenwald.



Jews captured during the suppression of the Warsaw ghetto uprising are led away from the burning ghetto by SS guards, 1943, © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Louis Gonda.



Hannah Szenes died fighting against the evil of Nazi persecution. Participants may think or reflect on the ways her song can be read as a response to the evil she confronted. What do you make of this response? What evil do you see in the world that you can do something about?

Leaders may choose to discuss these questions as part of the concluding section of Hitkansut, "We Reflect: Remembering Responsibly."



Hannah Szenes in British Army uniform in Yugoslavia, circa 1940s. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Hannah Szenes Memorial Center.

Eili Eili 🎵

Oh Lord, My God, I pray that these things never end.
The sand and the sea, the rush of the waters,
The crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.
The sand and the sea,
The rush of the waters,
The crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart.

אֵלִי, אֵלִי
שְׁלֹא יִגְמַר לְעוֹלָם
הַחֹל וְהָיָם,
רִשְׁרוּשׁ שֶׁל הַמַּיִם,
בְּרַק הַשָּׁמַיִם,
תְּפִילַת הָאָדָם.

Eili, Eili

Shelo yigamer le'olam

Hachol ve'hayam

Rishrush shel hamayim

Be'rak hashamayim

Tefilat ha'adam

Hannah Szenes (1921–1944), born in Budapest, was a Jewish poet who volunteered in the British army. Szenes parachuted into occupied Hungary, was captured, tortured for information, and eventually executed.



The background is a solid brown color. It features several dark brown silhouettes of birds in flight, scattered across the upper and middle sections. At the bottom, there are horizontal lines of barbed wire, also in a dark brown color. Two yellow rectangular boxes are positioned in the center, containing white text.

We Honor

Human Dignity

In a place where there is no humanity, strive to be human. (Pirkei Avot 2:5)

ובמקום שאין אֲנָשִׁים, הִשְׁתַּדֵּל לִהְיוֹת אִישׁ: (אבות ב:ה)



* WE HONOR

What does it look like to be a person, fully human, in the face of inhumanity?

Participants can choose from the texts below that describe acts of resistance and humanity or share their own stories.

1 Aharon Appelfeld

My reminiscences of the war, of the second world war—I hope it will not surprise you—are of love, endless love. Anyone who was in the Ghetto and saw mothers protecting their children, mothers not eating but feeding their children, young boys staying with their parents, defending them until the last minute, will understand. Asking myself from where do I derive my writing force, I know that it is not from horror scenes but love scenes that existed there everywhere. My world was not formed by the executioner, it is not dominated by an irreparable, endless evil; I remained with people, and I loved them.

Aharon Appelfeld was born in Czernowitz, Romania, in 1932. When he was eight, his mother was killed, and he and his father were sent to a concentration camp. He escaped and spent three years in hiding, a child alone moving from village to village. He reached Israel in 1946 with Aliyat Hanoar. Appelfeld's literary work reflects his experience as a child in the Shoah and as a young Shoah survivor in the young State of Israel. His books describe Jewish life in Europe before, during and after World War II. He said the above in April 2012, during a meeting with a research group at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.

Who is a Person?

In the face of evil, cruelty, murder,
destruction, and erasure, and in a
moment of absolute powerlessness,
something incredible happened.
Men, women, and children, both
Jews and righteous gentiles,
discovered ways to
stand up for human dignity.



Three members of the Paper Brigade pose together on a balcony in the Vilna Ghetto. Pictured are (left to right): Shmaryahu (Shmerke) Kaczerginski, Rakhele (Rachel) Pupko-Krinski, and Avraham Sutzkever. Krinski was a prominent educator. Kaczerginski was a Yiddish-speaking poet, musician, writer and cultural activist. After learning that Pupko-Krinski had hidden her child, Sarah, outside of the ghetto, Kaczerginski wrote *The Lonely Child* as a tribute to Sarah and all Jewish children who had been forced into hiding by the war. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of the Sutzkever Family

2 The Hundred Thousandth Book

Sunday the 13th [December 1942]

Today the ghetto celebrated the circulation of the hundred thousandth book in the ghetto library. The festival was held in the auditorium of the theater. [...] Hundreds of people read in the ghetto. The reading of books in the ghetto is the greatest pleasure for me. The book unites us with the future, the book unites us with the world. The circulation of the hundred thousandth book is a great achievement for the ghetto and the ghetto has the right to be proud of it.

—Yitskhok Rudashevski, *The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto*

Yitskhok Rudashevski (1927-1943) lived in Vilna before the war and in the Vilna Ghetto during the Shoah. He wrote a diary, chronicling his experiences, that was discovered in 1944. Here, Rudashevski testifies to the arts culture of the Vilna Ghetto.

3 Sabbath candles in Auschwitz

They put us into the blocks at Birkenau - these were formerly horses' stables. We received wooden planks on which we were supposed to sleep, to lie down. One of the first things we did, I and my friends who arrived with me, was to find acquaintances amongst those who survived, amongst the prisoners who were there in Auschwitz. And we found them. One of the first things we asked them for were two candle-stubs. On the Sabbath eve we assembled on the top shelf in our block. We were then some 10 to 12 girls. ... We kindled the candles and began quietly to sing Sabbath songs.

We didn't know, since we were blinded by the light of the candles, we didn't know what was happening around us. After a short interval we heard the sound of stifled crying around us, on all the bunks surrounding us. First of all the crying terrified us, but it also moved us. It emerged that from all the places, and it was possible to move from bunk to bunk, Jewish women, who had been there for months and even for years, collected together around us on the nearby bunks and listened to the singing. Among them were some who came down and asked us to allow them to say the blessing over the candles.

A Hanukkah candle lighting ceremony in the Westerbork transit camp, Netherlands, December 1943. © Yad Vashem Photo Archive, Jerusalem. FA29/124



Rivka Kuper (1920–2007) was a member of the Krakow Ghetto Underground, alongside her husband Aharon “Dollek” Liebeskind. In November 1942 she was arrested and sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau where she remained for two years. Her husband was murdered. At the end of January 1945, Kuper was sent on a death march. She was eventually saved by the Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte’s rescue operation and was transported to Denmark by the Red Cross. She immigrated to Israel and lived in Deganiah Bet for the rest of her life.

4 Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

Viktor Frankl (1905–1997), born in Vienna, was a neurologist and a psychiatrist. During the Shoah, he chose to remain in Vienna and protect his parents, despite having received permission to enter the United States. He was eventually sent first to the Theresienstadt ghetto, and then to Auschwitz. Frankl managed to survive, and in 1946 he published his famous book, Man's Search for Meaning. The book documents his experiences as a prisoner during the Shoah and describes his psychotherapeutic approach to finding meaning in life.

5 *You Have to Save Your Life*

My parents lived under the roof, in one room, together with a kapo [Jewish prisoner supervisor under the SS] from Bonn. He was working in the kitchen after a while, and that was very excellent for us, because he was able to bring home the little bit of extra food, which helped me a lot. At that point, I had been sick a lot. I'd had pleurisy, jaundice, tuberculosis, and scarlet fever....

Somewhere along the line, he came home with some bacon at one point. My father said I should eat it. I didn't want to eat it. A Jew doesn't eat bacon. That's how I was brought up. Well, now I got a whole lecture on how you have to save your life under wartime conditions, and would I please eat the bacon? All right, coming from him!

Anneliese Winterberg Nossbaum was born in Guben, Germany in 1929. In July of 1942, she and her parents were deported to Theresienstadt. She survived multiple concentration camps and a death march. In 1996, she gave a testimony to the USC Shoah Foundation. She later settled in America.

6 A Soldier in the US Army

While I was in City College in New York, the war broke out. My father who read the Jewish daily paper, *The Forward*, said, “Don’t you know what’s going on? They’re taking the Jews to big camps and they’re shooting them and gassing them.” I said, “Come on, Pop, that’s just propaganda; if it were true, it would be in the *New York Times*.” When America joined the war, I was drafted. I thought, “It’s my turn, I will do whatever I have to do, whatever I’m capable of doing; and as a Jew I have an obligation of defense...” I was a reconnaissance scout—somebody had to go out in front to bring intelligence, so that people don’t walk into a trap. It was dangerous. If I’m meeting up with Germans, I’ll hide my Yiddish, if I’m meeting up with the Poles, I will do the same thing, if I meet a Frenchman, it’s French. I became the unofficial interpreter for my battalion.

We were in Bavaria, when all of a sudden, in the distance, I look out and I see a horde of people coming, hundreds and running, wearing tattered rags. One man said to me, “We’ve been waiting for you to come for five years. I knew you’d come.” There were people from all over Europe, so I said, “Are there any Jews here?” And he said “There were Jews here working along with everybody else. But last night we heard your guns, and the Germans ordered all the Jews to be taken out to the forest and killed.”

The last day of the war I was shot, and I was sent to France to a hospital. I remember one night when we were under very heavy artillery bombardment—we were in the third level down, so we were able to light a candle and write a letter. I wrote a letter to my boyhood friend, and I wrote: “Dear Herby, if God lets me come out of this alive, I will become a lawyer to help people.” I became a lawyer in 1949, and I never forgot that.

—Norman Liben, testimony

Norman Liben (1923 – 2007) was born in New York City, the third of four children born to immigrant parents from Russia and Romania. After completing his degree at City College of New York, Norman served in the US Army in the 13rd Armored Division from 1943-45. After the war, Norman received his law degree from New York University. He spent his career in solo practice, and always saw himself as “fighting for the underdog.” Norman and his wife, Zipporah, made aliyah in 1986. Approximately one-and-a half million Jewish soldiers, men and women alike, served in the armies of the Allies. Half a million Jewish men served in the Red Army, mostly in the upper ranks. Almost half of them were killed, and one hundred and sixty thousand of them received citations. In the US army, about half a million Jewish soldiers served on every front of the war, including liberating the camps. Tens of thousands of them received commendations for excellence. One hundred thousand Polish Jews served in both the Polish army and the allied forces. Thirty thousand volunteers from the Old Yishuv in the land of Israel served in the British army and the Jewish Brigade.

7 Mordechai Anielewicz's Last Letter



It is impossible to put into words what we have been through. One thing is clear, what happened exceeded our boldest dreams. ... I feel that great things are happening and what we dared do is of great, enormous importance...

It is impossible to describe the conditions under which the Jews of the ghetto are now living. Only a few will be able to hold out. The remainder will die sooner or later. Their fate is decided. ...

With the aid of our transmitter we heard the marvelous report on our fighting by the "Shavit" radio station. The fact that we are remembered beyond the ghetto walls encourages us in our struggle. Peace go with you, my friend! Perhaps we may still meet again! The dream of my life has risen to become fact. Self-defense in the ghetto will have been a reality. Jewish armed resistance and revenge are facts. I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men in battle.

—from Mordechai Anielewicz's last letter, April 23rd, 1943

Mordechai Anielewicz (1919–1943) was a commander in the Jewish fighters organization in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Anielewicz was killed in May of 1943 in a battle with Nazis in the ghetto, becoming a symbol of Jewish resistance in the Shoah. His letter is a call from the ghetto to the outside world.

A Jewish man emerges from his hiding place below the floor of a bunker prepared for the Warsaw ghetto uprising. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park

8 Hirsh Glik, “The Partisans’ Song” 🎵

Never say this is the final road for you, though
leadened skies may cover over days of blue.

As the hour that we longed for is so near,
our step beats out the message: we are here!

So, never say the road now ends for you, though
leadened skies may cover over days of blue.

As the hour that we longed for is so near,
our step beats out the message: we are here!

זאג נישט קיין מאָל, אַז דו גייסט דעם לעצטן וועג,
כאַטש הימלען בלייענע פאַרשטעלן בלויז טעג.
קומען וועט נאָך אונדזער אויסגעבענקטע שעה
!עסו וועט אַ פויק טאָן אונדער טראַט --- מיר זיינען דאָ

*Zog nit keyn mol, az du geyst dem letstn veg,
Khotsh himlen blayene farshteln bloye teg.
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte sho,
S'vet a poyk ton undzer trot: mir zaynen do!*

“The Partisans’ Song” was written by Hirsh Glik (1922–1944) in May 1943. He originally wrote it in Yiddish, and it was translated into English by Noam Lerman. Glik was a young Jewish prisoner in the Vilna Ghetto, and wrote the song to commemorate those who fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The song spread throughout the Partisans and became a symbol of heroic opposition to Nazi persecution.

9 Who is the Person Who Desires Life (Psalms 34:12–15)

Who is the person who desires life,
who loves days to know goodness?
Keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking lies.
Turn away from evil and do good,
seek peace and pursue it.

מיִהאַישׁ הֶחָפֶּץ חַיִּים אֲהֵב יָמִים לְרֵאוֹת טוֹב:
נִצֹר לְשׁוֹנָה מִרָע וּשְׂפָתַיִךְ מִדִּבֵּר מִרָמָה:
סוּר מִרָע וַעֲשֵׂה־טוֹב בְּקֶשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרַדְּפֶהוּ:

*Mi ha'ish he'chafetz chayim,
ohev yamim lirot tov?
N'tzor l'shoncha meira
us'fatecha midabeir mirma.
Sur meira va'asei tov,
bakeish shalom v'rodfeihu.*

Who is the Person

Who is the man who guarded his humanity even
when transformed into dust,
A father who sent away his daughter to live,
A mother who sent away her son,
A granddaughter who fought for her
grandmother's life,
A man who held the hand of a Stranger.

Who are the woman and man
who took up arms,
And inscribed new lines in the
Chronicles of freedom,
A man who kept his commandments
bound in tefillin (phylacteries),
A woman who issued forged papers,
And who stole across borders.

Who are the man and woman who wrote, painted,
told stories and dreamed,
Those who photographed and documented human
testimony,
The one who laughed and the one who loved,
The woman who scribbled recipes to make
the hunger subside,
And those who shared a slice of bread.

Who is the man who lifted the collapsed
during roll call,
The woman who completed the forced
labor of her sister,
Those who shared a word of
encouragement,
And those who, at twilight,
Under the shadow of the
crematorium pillar of smoke,
Stood in prayer and song.

Who are the children who played and dreamed,
And who wrote their poems between fences,
And those who never lost hold
of their little hands,
Even as they walked to their death.

Who is the man, the woman, the child
and the elder,
Who sanctified the Image of Humankind.

—*Michal Govrin*



A song or niggun appropriate to the theme of this section can be added here. Each paragraph may be assigned to different participants to capture the plurality of voices in the gathering.





*Jan Kostanski
(right) poses with
Wladek Cykiert in
the Warsaw ghetto.
© United States
Holocaust Memorial
Museum, courtesy of
Jan Kostanski*



We recognize the sacrifices and the generosity of righteous gentiles who stood in opposition to evil by treating those whose lives were threatened with human dignity.



One Who Saves a Single Soul
Is Like One Who Has Saved the
Entire World

וְכֹל הַמְּקִיִּים נִפְּשׁ אֶחָת
מִמַּעַלָּה עָלָיו הַכָּתוּב בְּאֵלֹ
קִיִּים עוֹלָם מְלֵא

Let us remember the righteous
among the nations.

Their faiths and their countries
were varied,

but they all rejected
noninvolvement and instead
they held out a hand.

For us, they exemplify the
human spirit.

10 High Schoolers in Bulgaria

In January 1942, the Bulgarian Parliament brought to vote the “National Defense Law” constricting Jews in many areas and instructing every Jew to wear “the yellow button”—a plastic, yellow Star of David—on the outermost layer of their clothing. At the time, my sister was in high school, and, like most Jews in Bulgaria, she studied in a public school. Wearing the yellow button made her feel anxious and embarrassed. How would her classmates see her? How would they respond? Even her mother’s encouraging words, “Things will get better,” were to no avail—and having said those words in public, her mother was taken in for interrogation. Terrified, my sister walked into class the next day with the yellow button on her clothes. To her great surprise, all of her classmates were also wearing that symbol of shame, out of identification with their Jewish classmates. This was one discovery of support on the path to the salvation of the Jews of Bulgaria.

—Hertzlina Jaeger, testimony

Hertzlina (Kalev) Jaeger (1943-2022) was born in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, and was saved—as were most Bulgarian Jews—thanks to collaboration between members of the government, members of the clergy, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens. The Hitkansut Haggadah is the first place her testimony was committed to writing.



Studio portrait of two Bulgarian Jewish siblings wearing Jewish badges that was taken in Kyustendil, Bulgaria, following their expulsion from the capital, Sofia. Pictured are Marietta and Israel Baruch. During the period of their exile in the provinces, the members of extended Baruch family lived in the home of Miriam and Pinkas Baruch, who had retained their house in Kyustendil after moving to Sofia in the 1930s. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Israel Borouchoff



*Dr. Adélaïde Hautval
at the Righteous
Among the Nations
ceremony in her honor
at Yad Vashem,
April 17, 1966.
© Yad Vashem
Documents Archive
Item ID 14481525*

11 Living Up to One's Oath

In January 1943, after detention in camps in Pithiviers and Beaune-la-Rolande and in prisons in Romainville, Orléans, and Compiègne, Dr. Hautval was sent to the Birkenau death camp with another two hundred French women prisoners. Hautval, a devout Protestant, was housed with five hundred Jewish women prisoners, and was nicknamed “the saint.” She applied her medical knowledge to treat Jewish prisoners who had contracted typhus, secluding them in a separate part of the block, in order to prevent contagion. Hautval, employed as a physician by the camp commander, refrained from reporting the prisoners’ illness and thereby spared them immediate death. She treated Jewish patients with boundless dedication, and her gentle hands and warm words were of inestimable value to Jews in the hell of Auschwitz. [S]he said, in words engraved on the prisoners’ memory, “... Let us behave like human beings as long as we are alive.”

—“*The Stories of Six Righteous Among the Nations
in Auschwitz: Flickers of Light*,” Yad Vashem

Dr. Adélaïde Hautval was a French psychiatrist who was jailed by the Nazis for attempting to sneak into Occupied France to attend her mother’s burial in Paris. She repeatedly refused to participate in medical experiments on Jewish prisoners. She survived the Shoah and later served as a source for Leon Uris’ book, Exodus. On May 18, 1965, Yad Vashem recognized Dr. Adélaïde Hautval as a Righteous Among the Nations.

Yizkor for the Righteous Gentiles

Remember, People of Israel,
the Righteous Gentiles,
who placed their own lives in
danger for the sake of our persecuted
and tortured brothers and sisters during
the Shoah, 1939-1945, and who were
as shining stars in the overwhelming
darkness of evil.

Those who spoke out at a time of silence,
Those who offered sanctuary and a lease
on life in the eye of the murderous storm,
Those who supported those who were
failing and extended a helping hand,
food and clothing.

Who answered the cry of men,
women and children:
Men and women, workers
of the land and city-dwellers
Of humble standing and of high rank,
People of faith and conscience.

In the very valley of the shadow of death,
these men and women stood by our
people, and from the fiery inferno they
saved the few and the many.
They kept the beacon of humanity alight
When all around them humanity dimmed.

Remember, People of Israel, their grandness
Of spirit, their heroism, and their pure hearts.
May God bind their souls in the bond
Of life, and may it come to pass as it was
Written: "As the whirlwind passes, so is the
Wicked no more: but the righteous is an
Everlasting foundation" (Proverbs 10:25)

—*Rani Jaeger (translated by Yaron Ben-Ami)*

*Rani Jaeger is the son of Hertzlina (Kalev) Jaeger, who
was born in Bulgaria. This is the first "Yizkor" written for
Righteous Gentiles.*

12 The Survivors



A Survivor, or child or grandchild of survivors is invited to share their testimony. Participants may choose in addition or instead to read a testimonial such as those included in this section.

We have been liberated! It was the 27th of April, 1945. After my experiences in the camps, I was both physically and mentally exhausted. As they carried me to the hospital on a stretcher, we passed by a large mirror. I happened to see my reflection, and I was shocked. Who was that thin skeleton? The medical staff wanted to separate me from my precious cargo—a plate and spoon, two items without which a person could not survive in the camps—but I would not let go of them. I couldn't internalize the fact that things had changed. I lay on the bed, and everything was obscure. As I opened my eyes, I heard an American officer saying to a German doctor, "See what you did!" after which I heard the doctor say, "This is a hopeless case." His words pierced me like the tip of a knife, and I became outraged. I'm supposed to be a hopeless case? As if from a distance, I heard myself shout, "You are a hopeless case! This case is not hopeless, this case will live!"

—Zev Birger, No Time for Patience

Zev Birger (1926–2011) was one of the founders of the Bnei Zion Foundation, which aimed to preserve Hebrew language and culture during the years of World War II. He survived the death camps and was active in "Aliyah Bet," an organization helping survivors illegally immigrate from Europe to Israel. Birger was one of the founders of the Israeli government's Customs and Excise Department and Deputy Minister of Industry, Trade, and Labor. As special assistant to Jerusalem Mayor Teddy

Kollek, Birger developed the city's culture of economy and tourism. He helped grow the Israeli film industry and founded the Sam Spiegel Film and Television School. He helped his wife, Trudy—also a Shoah survivor—start a free dentistry clinic for disabled children. Zev Birger served the last thirty years of his life as manager of the Jerusalem International Book Fair, turning it into a profitable institution where authors, editors, and publishers from around the world could meet and mingle.

Choose Life

וּבְחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים

(Deuteronomy 30:19 דְּבָרִים ל"ט)

Afterwards... how do we rise?
Man and woman, boy and girl,
The displaced, the exiled, and
the surviving remnant,
The heroes of the everyday,
who created a new life,
They all command us to live.



We Reflect

Remembering
Responsibly

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt (Deuteronomy 15:15)

וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם (דברים טו:טו)



WE REFLECT

After we have mourned the destruction and loss, after we have told of the evil and of standing in opposition to it, let us now ask: What can we learn, here and now, about how to remember responsibly?

Just as we are responsible for the memory of those lost and those who suffered during the Shoah, we are responsible for our actions today.



Landsberg, Germany, 1947, Survivors from the town of Ozorkow, Poland at a memorial service in the DP camp. © Yad Vashem Photo Archive, Jerusalem. 1486/1114



Two elements are inextricably interwoven within the Jewish tradition: Zakhor and Shamor—Remembering and Guarding. We call upon these elements as we commemorate the Shoah.

Zakhor: What is the nature of our responsibility to remember?

Shamor: What does the memory of the Shoah call us to do?

1 How We Remember

Some in the Jewish community understand the primary legacy of how we remember the Holocaust as manifesting in the moral obligation that we remain vigilant as a people against the next threat, from wherever it may come... The Holocaust signified the worst of our vulnerability as a people: If we will not be for ourselves, who will be for us? (Mishna Avot 1:13)

Others in the Jewish community deploy the metaphor and memory of the Holocaust—not without some verve and risk—as a cautionary tale for the Jewish people in how we exercise power over others. The memory of victimhood creates an impulse to “compensate”; as an abuse victim can become an abuser, there is an emerging voice in our community that cautions us to not allow our memory to become an echo chamber in which we become deaf to the emergence of our own power as a people, and to our changing role in history. If we are only for ourselves, what are we? (ibid.) And yet still others translate the memory of Jewish victimhood to a broad moral obligation that we become the primary actors in the world to prevent genocide wherever it materializes, to embody a culture of urgency that no one else can understand

quite as well as we do. ... We learn from our trauma that someone must stand for injustice wherever it appears, and it had best be us. If not now, when? (ibid.)

Memory of our trauma, then, animates a culture of self-preservation, a fear of excess self-aggrandizement and a sense of global responsibility. Which is the real Jewish memory?

—Yehuda Kurtzer, “Jewish Memory Week: A Tale in Three Parts,” March 11, 2014, excerpt

Yehuda Kurtzer is the President of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America.



Participants are welcome to read the following excerpt in pairs and discuss the questions that follow.

Where do you see these different types of memory reflected in the Jewish community? In your own life?

Which do you find most compelling? How would you define or describe the nature of Jewish memory? How will you exemplify Jewish memory in your life?

The Call

The memory of yesterday is the call of today
 I remember that I was exiled
 And will defend my home, my people, my kin
 I will open my door to the stranger,
 The refugee, the displaced
 For my people were the strangers and pursued —
 The memory of yesterday is the call of today

For I was the starving one and scavenged for bread
 I was the naked one
 And sought a human face
 My people were round up and slaughtered
 And the world was silent then —
 The pain of yesterday is the call of today

I remember
 And will share my wealth and well-being
 with those distant and near, the poor of my town and
 the foreigner
 In days of peace and in tempestuous times —
 The horrors of yesterday obligate me today
 I will guard against evil and its many seductions
 I will not let slogans lead me astray
 Igniting hatred, erasing humanity —
 The wounds of history warn us today

And when war erupts and again strikes the world
 I will not stand idly by, I will not watch from a distance
 I will remember that the only actual border
 Runs through the human heart

And the voice that cries out from one People to another
 The voice that cries out — calls to me
 The memory of the Shoah is a call

—*Michal Govrin*

Translated by Rachel Jacoby Rosenfield with the author

2 Purify Our Hearts

On Shabbat in Auschwitz, after our Shabbat meal—two paper-thin slices of bread for Lechem Mishneh [the double portion of Shabbat bread]—we would sing Shabbat songs while pushing a wagon full of stones... The song we loved most was “Purify our hearts to serve you in truth, and—with love and acceptance—grant us your Shabbat.” We sang it with great fervor... There were times in Auschwitz when my mind would go blank like a clean sheet of paper, when I couldn’t think about anything at all. But that tune, those words, they became a prayer that accompanied me with every step I took... “Oy, Master of the World,” we prayed, “please help us keep our pure hearts.”

—Pearl Benisch, *To Vanquish the Dragon*

Pearl Benisch (1917-2017) was born in Krakow, and was one of the first students of the Beis Yaakov school network. She was one of a group of ten women known as “The Zehnerschaft” (“The Ten”), nine of whom studied at Beis Yaakov, who came together in the Płaszów concentration camp. For over two years, the group provided mutual aid in Płaszów, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen, as well as on the death marches. All ten women survived the Shoah.

3 Remember Me

Something that always struck me was how at the conclusion of my great-grandfather’s narratives, he would say “Remember this, and tell your children.” I thought about this as I was on Facetime with my Zayde while he was on his deathbed: The last time I ever spoke to him was when my whole family called him to say, “Shabbat Shalom.” Vividly, I recall his exact words as we were about to hang up: in his old, Polish-accented voice, he said to my brother and me, “Boys, remember me...Remember me.”

From that point on, I promised myself I would always remember him. Not the Holocaust survivor, not the miraculous 101-year-old man, but my Zayde. My Zayde. His legacies, his stories, and everything he worked for in this country of opportunity.

So, what is the power of memory? Having the person live on throughout your family’s generations. I want my children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren to remember my Zayde; to tell his stories, and pass on his legacy: “Remember me.”

—Caleb Starr, *Age 13, 2021*

4 Shaul Tchernichovsky “I Believe,” 1892 🎵

Rejoice, rejoice now in the dreams
I the dreamer am he who speaks
Rejoice, for I'll have faith in people
For in people I believe.

For my soul still yearns for freedom
I've not sold it to a calf of gold
For I shall yet have faith in people
In its spirit great and bold.

That will cast off binding chains
Raise us up, hold high our heads
Workers will not die of hunger
For souls — release,
for poor folk — bread.

שְׂחֵקִי, שְׂחֵקִי עַל הַחֲלוֹמוֹת
זוֹ אֲנִי הַחֹלֵם שָׁח.
שְׂחֵקִי כִּי בָאֲדָם אֲאָמִין,
כִּי עוֹדֵנִי מֵאָמִין בָּךְ.

כִּי עוֹד נַפְשִׁי דְרוֹר שׁוֹאֶפֶת
לֹא מִכֶּרְתִּיהָ לְעֵגֶל-פָּז,
כִּי עוֹד אֲאָמִין גַּם בָּאָדָם,
גַּם בְּרוּחוֹ, רוּחַ עֹז.

רוּחוֹ יִשְׁלִיךְ כְּבָלֵי-הַבֶּל,
יְרוֹמְמוֹנוּ בְּמִתִּי-עַל
לֹא בִרְעֵב יָמוּת עֶבֶד;
דְּרוֹר – לְנֶפֶשׁ, פַּת – לֶדָל

*Sachki sachki al hachalomot
Zu ani hacholem sach
Sachki ki va'adam a'amin
Ki odeini ma'amin bach*

*Ki od nafshi d'ror shoe'fet
Lo mechartiha le'eigel paz
Ki od a'amin gam ba'adam
Gam b'rucho ruach az.*

*Rucho yashlich kavlei-hevel
Yerome'me'nu be'motei al
Lo ba'ra'av yamut oveid
D'ror lanefesh, pat la'dal*

5 For I Shall Yet Have Faith

“When I was a child in Tel Aviv, my mother was silent. She uttered only a few out-of-context sentences, one of which was, ‘In Auschwitz I would sing Tchernichovsky’s “I Believe” to myself. Then, with great passions, I would sing, ‘For I shall yet have faith in people / In its spirit great and bold.’”

—Michal Govrin, speaking about her mother, Rina Govrin

Rina Govrin (Riga Poser-Laub, 1912-1987) was the secular tenth member of “The Zehnerschaft,” (“The Ten”), the group of ten women who came together in the Płaszów concentration camp. After the liberation, she ran the Aliyah Bet project in the British section of Germany.

6 Vetaher libeinu... 🎵

Purify Our Hearts
Purify our hearts to serve You in truth.

וְטַהַר לִבֵּנוּ
וְטַהַר לִבֵּנוּ לְעִבְדֶּךָ בְּאֵמֶת

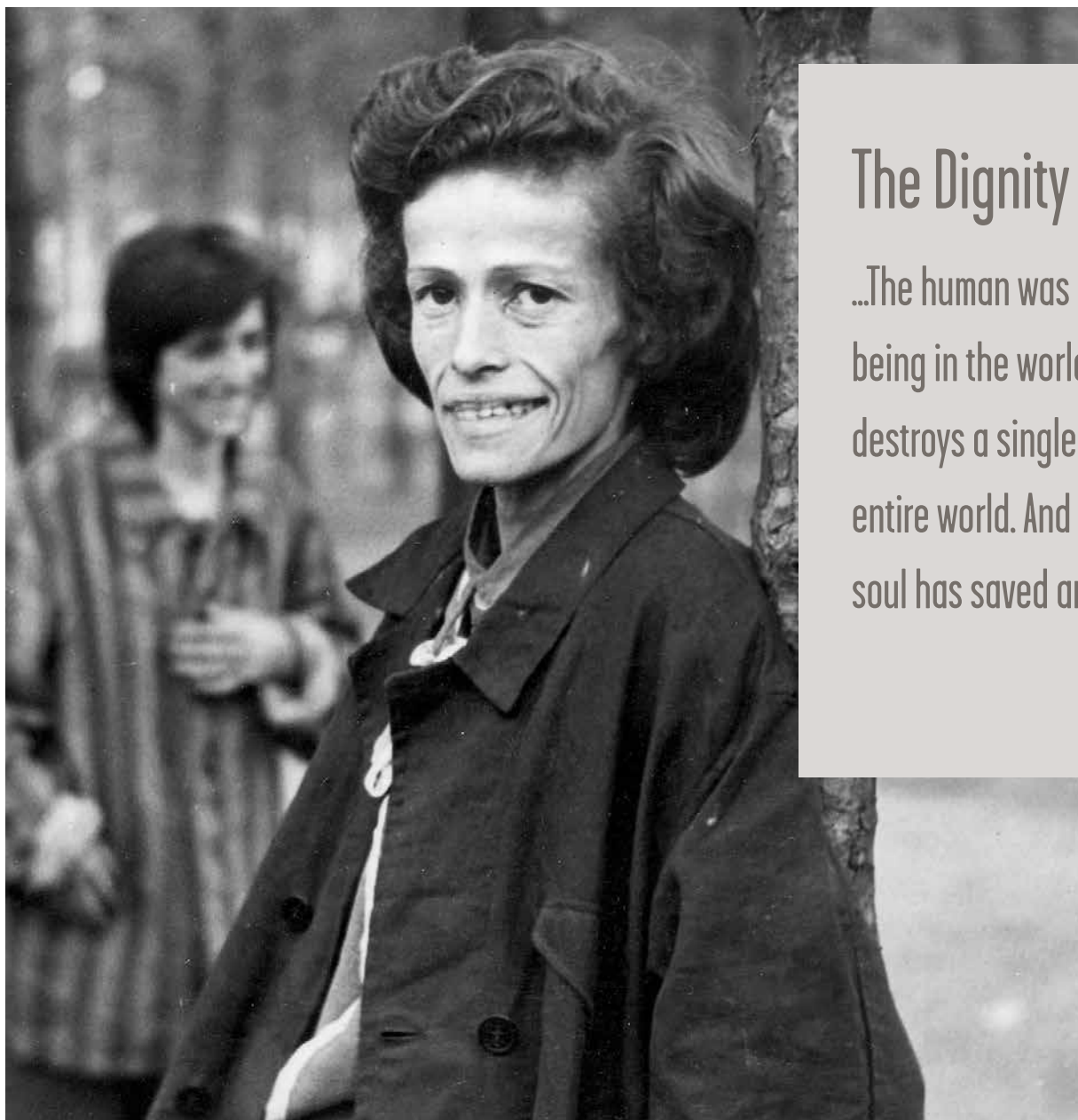
Vetaher libeinu l'ovdecha be'emet

—from the Shabbat liturgy



* QUESTION TO PONDER

What songs were sung to you as a child that are important to you? When do you sing such songs to yourself to find strength?



The Dignity of Human Life

...The human was created as a unique being in the world, to teach that one who destroys a single soul has destroyed an entire world. And one who saves a single soul has saved an entire world.

—Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5;
Yerushalmi Talmud Sanhedrin 37a

*Bergen-Belsen, 1945,
a survivor after liberation.
© Yad Vashem Photo Archive,
Jerusalem. FA 181/58*

As our gathering comes to an end, we remind ourselves of the steps we took together in our Hitkansut Gathering.



QUESTION TO PONDER

How might we build a world in which every human being is treated as unique, of equal value and of infinite value?



We Entered
We Remembered
We Lamented
We Confronted
We Honored
We Reflected

Each step we took along the path of memory bore out our Responsibility to Remember and stirred within us the resolve to Remember Responsibly.



*We extend a hand to the human being sitting
next to us. We rise and say together:*

Blessed are You, God, Ruler of the Universe,
Who created humanity.

Here ends our Gathering, our Hitkansut,
for the Remembrance of the Shoah and our
affirmation of the Dignity of Human Life.

ברוך אתה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם.

תָּמָה הַתְּכַנְּסוֹת יוֹם הַשּׁוֹאָה וְהָאָדָם.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
yotzeir ha'adam.

Tama hitkansut yom ha'sho'ah v'ha'adam.

*The Hitkansut Gathering concludes with the singing in
unison of the niggun that the group sung together at the
opening of the Gathering.*

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