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This book is in  
memory of Kuba  
Wodislavsky, a Holocaust  
survivor from Czestochowa,  
who fought and was  
wounded in the Israeli War  
of Independence and  
established the Holocaust  
and Heroism Memorial  
Museum at Ariel at his  
home together with his  
wife Irena.

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# Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	ix
<i>About the Authors</i> .....	xi
<i>Introduction</i> .....	xvii

The Trip Experience: Poland and the Polish People as Perceived by Israeli Youth in Light of Their Trips to the Death Camps .....	1
<b>Nitza Davidovitch and Dan Soen</b>	

A Test of Leadership: IDF Delegations to Poland— A Tool for Promoting Command-Oriented Leadership? .....	26
<b>Nitza Davidovitch, Osnat Ur-Leurer, and Dan Soen</b>	

The Pedagogy of Commonness: An Alternative Theory in Teaching about the Holocaust.....	50
<b>Marek Kaźmierczak</b>	

Myth and Reality: On "Future Generations" of the Holocaust .....	71
<b>Haim Y. Knobler, Lily Haber, Batya Brutin, and Zvi Zemishlany</b>	
A13808 .....	81
<b>Ruth Dorot</b>	
The Unterlompurg Synagogue: Issues Involved in Restoring a Demolished Synagogue .....	136
<b>David Cassuto and Zvi Orgad</b>	
The Abuse of Holocaust Memory in 2011–2012 .....	168
<b>Manfred Gerstenfeld</b>	
Studying Judaism, Jewish History, and the Jews: The Experience of Jewish Studies at Academic Campuses in Poland Today.....	194
<b>Edyta Gawron</b>	
Remnants of the Holocaust: A Process of Consciousness Far from Conclusion .....	211
<b>Zvi Gil</b>	
<i>Index</i> .....	229

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David Ben-Gurion was the leader who arose and led the dry bones to life in the Land of Israel. In his reports on visits to the death camps, Ben-Gurion wrote:

I saw the crematoria where hundreds of thousands and millions of Jews from all European countries were incinerated—from the west, east, south, and north, Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, of all ethnic groups and political affiliations . . . the few remnants, miraculously saved from the gas chambers, from the forced labor, from torture and torment, from beatings and humiliation—on their behalf I bring you [in the Land of Israel] the greetings of brothers. I have been charged with conveying two wishes. One wish—Jewish unity. Together they died, were tortured, and suffered undifferentiated by clan, descent, or politics. The hangmen made no distinction . . . and the second wish—the State of Israel. This is the last testament of the millions of martyrs who went to their death: We died only because we belonged to a people bereft of homeland and state, and the victory of liberty and justice shall not prevail unless the historical wrong done to our people shall be corrected.

—David Ben-Gurion, as quoted by Michael Bar Zohar in *Ben-Gurion*

Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ Therefore prophesy and say to them: This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.”

—Ezekiel 37:11–12

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The constant assistance and support we received served as an inexhaustible source of inspiration, promoting thoughts and actions for the sake of future generations.

We hope that this research experience will be utilized to develop additional programs and new insights in Holocaust instruction and public dissemination, as well as for cooperation between institutions, organizations, and public figures who are working diligently to advance the principle of commemoration—in theory and in practice.



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## Zvi Gil

Zvi Gil was born in Zdunska-Wola, a township near the city of Lodz, to a well-known and well-to-do family. His grandfather was the head of the local Jewish community and one of the more prominent leaders of the Jewish Orthodox Movement “Agudat Israel” (Union of Israel), as well as a close friend of the Grand Rabbi of Gur. Gil has served in senior positions at the Israel National Broadcasting Service, among them head of radio in Tel Aviv, head of news and sports of Israel Television, and head of international cooperation of the Israel Broadcasting Authority. He has produced and directed numerous documentary films. He holds a BA in political science and international relations (Hebrew University) and an MA in sociology and mass communication (New York University). He was awarded an honorary degree by the Newhouse Communication Center of Syracuse University and has been a lecturer on mass media in various academic institutions in Israel and in the United States. Gil has published six books, including fiction and non-fiction works, some of which address the history of media.

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Lili Haber is the chairperson of the Association of Cracowians in Israel and the Association of Polish Jews in Israel. She is devoted to perpetuating the memory of the lost Polish-Jewish community and ensuring that future generations connect to these roots and find inspiration in the magnificent 1,000-year history of the Jewish community in Poland. Haber is fluent in Polish and is involved in many initiatives designed to promote Israeli-Polish relationships.

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Marek Kaźmierczak received his PhD from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, where he also earned an MA in philosophy and an MA in Polish literature and language. He studied for five years at “Artes Liberales” Academy, an individual interdisciplinary liberal arts education program in literary studies, philosophy, and media studies at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, the University of Silesia, and the University of Warsaw. Kaźmierczak works in the Institute of European Culture (in Gniezno) of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. His fields of interest include semiology of culture, contemporary philosophy, the relationship of contemporary philosophy and literature, and media studies. Kaźmierczak’s research focuses on representations of the Shoa in popular culture, and his most recent book is entitled *Auschwitz on the Internet: Representations of the Holocaust in Popular Culture*.

## Haim Knobler

Professor Haim Y. Knobler, former head of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Mental Health Department, teaches at the Hebrew University Hadassah Medical School in Jerusalem and is the president of the Israeli branch of the Israeli-Polish Mental Health Association.

## Zvi Orgad

Zvi Orgad studied graphic design and teaching at the Wizo Haifa Academy of Design and Education. Since 1997, he has worked as a graphic designer and illustrator, and has participated in several art and illustration exhibitions. In 2009, he studied Jewish art at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies. In 2011 and 2012, he studied in the master’s program of the Israel Heritage Department at Ariel University. His main interest is synagogue art, and his thesis work was written about the wooden eighteenth-century Unterlimpurg synagogue.

## Dan Soen

Professor Dan Soen earned his BA in Oriental Studies at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1955. He earned his PhD at Vienna University in Cultural Anthropology (1959). He has taught in various universities in Israel and abroad (New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States) and has chaired various departments in numerous academic institutions. He has also directed several

research institutions and published approximately 30 books and 120 articles on social issues in Israel and elsewhere. Soen currently heads the Department of Sociology & Anthropology and is chair of the Dual Major Department at Ariel University. He is also a professor at the graduate school of the Kibbutzim School of Education in Tel Aviv.

## **Osnat Ur-Leurer**

Mrs. Osnat Ur-Leurer recently retired from the IDF Education Corps to focus on developing and implementing a range of formal and informal education programs, in Israel and globally.

During the final five years of her military service, she was the commander of the “Witnesses in Uniform” program, a unique initiative bringing together IDF soldiers and officers to follow the paths of Jews in Poland and Europe during the Holocaust era. Ur-Leurer holds an MA in Public Policy Management from Bar-Ilan University. She currently guides various missions to Poland, including youth school groups, and she specializes in integrating these journeys into comprehensive educational programs.

## **Zvi Zemishlany**

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# Introduction

We must see the Holocaust as a giant historical crossroads, from which different roads depart in different directions, where taking each of these roads is self-justified: despair of the world versus belief and desire to repair it, reinforcement of one's faith in God, or the opposite—loss of faith, the normalcy of Jewish existence, or the opposite—irrevocable proof that this existence is not normal, with the Holocaust providing proof of the unique Jewish destiny . . . to what degree our destiny and our place in the world are essential.

—A. B. Yehoshua, *The Holocaust: A Crossroads*

As time passes, the feeling and recognition grow stronger that it is permissible to speak of the Holocaust as an emotional, cognitive, and moral experience for today's individuals. The Holocaust experience is a fundamental element in the relationship between Israel and other countries, including those of Europe. This is especially the case with respect to Israel's relationship with Poland, in whose territory the unprecedented horrors were perpetrated, as well as with Germany, the country that is branded with the mark of Cain.

Studying the Holocaust is a moral experience that enfolds an obligation to remember; Holocaust education is both an honor and an obligation for this and future generations, a joint obligation of the family of nations and of education and cultural systems around the world. Over time, the Holocaust has become an academic, artistic, and research experience that embraces different age groups operating in diverse educational settings. The intellectual, emotional, and moral experience that emerges as we engage in Holocaust teaching and learning poses new challenges for research and discovery, and offers an opportunity for a novel view of the Holocaust events through an interdisciplinary lens.

This volume summarizes the invaluable insights and lessons learned by Holocaust educators operating in numerous fields and arenas. Its aim is to provide important resources for Holocaust educators and to ensure that the relevancy and appeal of Holocaust programs is continually revised and improved. Special attention is given to the incorporation of multidimensional aspects of learning and experience in Holocaust education in order to enhance students' understanding on cognitive, emotional, and moral levels.

In their work, Nitza Davidovitch and Dan Soen review several major programs offering experiential learning about the Holocaust and explore the cognitive and behavioral effects of these programs on learners. The authors present and discuss the results of a comparative study of school journeys to Poland, including the opinions of pupils, parents, school staff members, and counselors regarding the experience and its impact, and explore youngsters' attitudes toward Poland and Polish people after participating in a trip to Holocaust sites in Poland.

Nitza Davidovitch, Osnat Ur-Leurer, and Dan Soen describe "Witnesses in Uniform," an Israel Defense Force (IDF) project in which groups of soldiers visit Holocaust sites in Poland. The trip itinerary includes visits to sites related to Jewish history in Poland, including death camps and extermination sites, and an overview of Polish history. Ceremonies are held at various locations throughout the trip, team discussions are conducted by team leaders, and meetings are held with the IDF attaché in Poland; the soldiers also attend an evening with families of fallen soldiers, an encounter with a "Righteous Gentile" (a non-Jewish person who aided Jews during the Holocaust at great personal risk), and a testimonial session with the Holocaust survivor who accompanies the group to Poland.

Marek Kaźmierczak, writing on "The Pedagogy of Commonness," offers an alternative theory for Holocaust education. While the official forms of commemoration of the Holocaust are frequently observed, non-official ways of interpreting and understanding the past are also significant. Kaźmierczak proposes the pedagogy of commonness as a bolster to existing trends in teaching about the Holocaust; it is important to think about this alternative, complementary theory because of the influence of new media, mainly social media such as Web 2.0, on the representations of the Holocaust. The diversity of these representations is real, which means that they cannot be treated merely as aleatory "textual" incidents. The Internet reveals how younger generations are thinking about the Holocaust, and findings in these areas have important implications for contemporary discourse on the reception of the Holocaust.

Haim Knobler, Lili Haber, Batya Brutin, and Zvi Zemishlany call on Holocaust education to fulfill its obligation to relate to the Holocaust survivors living

among us. As long as Holocaust survivors are still alive, educational efforts must concentrate on them rather than on members of the “future generations.” The authors urge a thorough understanding of major issues, including the courage required for survival, survivors’ capacity for post-traumatic growth after inconceivable grief and trauma, the unique problems of child survivors, and the concerns of Holocaust survivors who reach old age. The authors argue that it is necessary to continue learning from Holocaust survivors who are still living, and to ensure their well-being.

Ruth Dorot focuses on the following problems: should the Holocaust, with all its horrors, be commemorated so that it is remembered, or should it be forgotten so that individuals and society can move on? How is it possible, if at all, to encompass the enormity and intensity of the colossal event simply through a monument, an obelisk, or a commemorative site? Might monuments be used by future generations as an escape from the need to deal with acts of remembrance? Is it right to establish Holocaust memorials or commemorative sites knowing they might end up serving as “fig leaves” for the murderers—a kind of cleansing of the horrific crimes they committed? Can or should atrocities of the scope of the Holocaust be commemorated through art, which deals in aesthetics? Can hell be remembered through beauty? Her chapter addresses these issues through a study of Holocaust monuments and memorial sites.

David Cassuto and Zvi Orgad present an account of the story of the survival of decorated wooden panels from a small synagogue in Unterlimpurg, a hamlet in southern Germany. In contrast to the complete destruction of all wall and ceiling murals in the wooden synagogues of Eastern Europe, the Unterlimpurg synagogue survived the hardships of the twentieth century and the Holocaust. By analyzing the ornamentation and attempting to faithfully reconstruct the interior disposition of the synagogue murals, the authors illuminate the Jewish congregation of Unterlimpurg, with its history and customs, contributing to the work of many contemporary scholars to revive obliterated Jewish congregations.

Manfred Gerstenfeld analyzes the growing phenomenon of Holocaust distortion, directing his attention to various developments during 2011 and 2012. He discusses many categories of Holocaust distortion: Holocaust

promotion and justification, denial, deflection and whitewashing, de-Judaization, equivalence, inversion, trivialization, and the obliterating of Holocaust memory.

Jewish studies in Poland, along with the revival of Jewish culture, reflect the contemporary Polish attitude to the Jewish heritage; their scale and intensity remains unique in the European context. Edya Gawron explores the growing interest in Jewish studies in Poland as a sign of respect for the role of Jewish Poles in the country's history, and as an attempt to recreate the missing Jewish part of Poland through research and education, accompanied by a slow but promising revival of Jewish life in Poland.

In the final chapter of this volume, Zvi Gil explores the meaning of the Holocaust, with reference to national, Jewish, and universal lessons on the one hand, and the frame of reference of remnants and survivors in the past and present on the other. His chapter demonstrates that the distinction is not merely a matter for research, but is a matter of practice, especially when focusing not only on the disaster that occurred but also on the current revival and the absence of its record as a major chapter in the history of the State of Israel.

We hope this book will help Holocaust educators and curriculum developers to design Holocaust education and attune it to the nature and needs of the current generation. It is intended to prepare educators to initiate and lead programs and encounters designed to teach youngsters about the Holocaust from multiple perspectives.

Nitza Davidovitch and Dan Soen



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# The Trip Experience: Poland and the Polish People as Perceived by Israeli Youth in Light of Their Trips to the Death Camps

**Nitza Davidovitch and Dan Soen**

## Preface

World War II ended on August 15, 1945. Between fifty and seventy-five million people lost their lives in a matter of six years. The entire world required a lengthy process of rehabilitation to recover from one of the greatest tragedies in human history. The following years were devoted to recovery and rebuilding of all that had been destroyed. At first the Holocaust, as one of the catastrophes of this war, was not accorded proper collective attention—neither in the world in general nor in Israel, whose citizens encompassed a very high proportion of Holocaust survivors.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in these years, Israel demonstrated an “official disregard of the Diaspora,”<sup>2</sup> intentionally avoiding any commemoration of the Holocaust, as a result of the association between the Diaspora and the Holocaust. Commemoration of one was perceived as commemoration of the other. Moreover, on the macro level, the Holocaust was perceived as a national catastrophe, for which silence was the best approach.<sup>3</sup> The young State of Israel sought to put an end to the exile, erase it

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- 1 Julia Resnik, “‘Sites of Memory’ of the Holocaust: Shaping National Memory of the Education System in Israel,” *Nations and Nationalism* 9 (2003): 297–317.
  - 2 Chaim Grossman, “March of the Living,” *Kesher Ayin* 147 (2005): 12–14 [Hebrew].
  - 3 Roni Stauber, *The Lesson for the Generation of Holocaust and Heroism in Public Thinking in the 1950s* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2000) [Hebrew].

from memory, and coin a new form of life. Thus, it chose to erase the memory of the Holocaust as well. Besides, the experience of establishing the State of Israel was so deep that, not surprisingly, Israel adopted the ethos of *revival* or *rebirth* as its constitutive discourse. This was compatible with the great optimism and future orientation characteristic of Israeli society in the first generation of its political independence.<sup>4</sup> It was some thirty years before Israel began to examine its wounds and before it was able to deal with its repressed memories. The Eichmann Trial, and in particular the trauma of the Yom Kippur War a dozen years later, were constitutive events that led to the creation of a Holocaust discourse, which acknowledges the significance of passing on the memory while linking the past to the present and the future.<sup>5</sup>

Another important fact was the immigration to Israel of many European survivors of the Holocaust. The Jewish population of Israel in the 1960s consisted of large numbers of people who had experienced the Holocaust in person. And personal experience is not to be compared with hearsay. Moreover, gradually, in time, living memories naturally began to disappear, and with the death of Holocaust survivors it gradually became evident that the Jewish Holocaust is a memory that will disappear unless organized efforts are made to preserve it.<sup>6</sup> This recognition, that collective memory can only be preserved through active means, led to the formation of formal and informal study programs for teaching the Holocaust. As early as 1963, the Ministry of Education and Culture prepared a formal program on "Holocaust and Heroism" for elementary and secondary schools.<sup>7</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, a new discipline emerged: teaching the Holocaust both formally and informally. Holocaust contents were integrated in the various textbooks. History, literature, civic studies, and Bible all included some reference to this chapter of Jewish history.

4 Eliezer Don Yehiya, "Religious Zionism and Its Positions in Immigration and Absorption Issues in the Yishuv Period," in *Kibbutz Galuyot*, ed. Devorah Hakohen (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 1998) [Hebrew].

5 Nurit Graetz, *A Captive of Its Dream* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, Ofakim, 1995) [Hebrew]; Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Yael Zerubavel, "The 'Mythological Sabra' and Jewish Past: Trauma, Memory, and Contested Identities," *Israel Studies* 7 (2002): 115–144.

6 Habbu Knoch, "Searching for Authenticity: Memory, Emotions, and Eyewitness Reports in Contemporary Germany," *Tabur* 1 (2008): 10–23.

7 Noah Zevilevitz, *Herut*, March 25, 1963, [http://www.ranaz.co.il/articles/article1711\\_19630325.asp](http://www.ranaz.co.il/articles/article1711_19630325.asp) [Hebrew].

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