THE HOLOCAUST ETHOS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Dilemmas and Challenges

edited by
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The Holocaust Ethos in the 21st Century: Dilemmas and Challenges

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We hope that the research efforts in this volume will constitute a foundation for work programs on the topic of the Holocaust, and for collaboration between institutions, organizations, and public figures who work to sustain the commitment of preserving the Holocaust memory.

"*…so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.*" (Psalms 78:6)

Nitra Davidovitch and Dan Soen

The contributions to this volume on the ethos of the Holocaust in the 21st century, and the dilemmas and challenges of Holocaust education, represent a wealth of experience based on studies conducted by our colleagues and scholars from Israel and beyond. Each offers a unique perspective on this issue.

The section on the Holocaust Instruction in Israel and Worldwide – An International Perspective on Holocaust Instruction and Conveyance, opens with a paper by Auron on Jewish identity and Jewish memory, from a Jewish historical perspective. Identity and memory assumed deep significance after the Holocaust: WWII and the Holocaust, on one hand, and the establishment of the State of Israel, on the second hand, fundamentally changed Jewish history. Despite the time that elapsed, Jewish attitudes to the Holocaust and its implications remain a key element in contemporary Jewish identity. In many ways, awareness of the Holocaust has increased over the years both in Jewish consciousness in Israel and in the Diaspora. While the memory of the Holocaust continues to be a central component of Jewish identity, Prof. Auron calls for a proper balance between the Zionist, Jewish, and universal components of Jewish identity.

Davidovitch and Soen discuss the role of citizenship studies in Israel in instilling democratic values in youngsters, and highlight the role of particularist (Jewish and Israeli) and universal aspects in formal and informal interdisciplinary curricula in Israel. Citizenship instruction in

Israel and around the world is a unique subject in the school landscape, and its ultimate aim of this subject is to turn students into better citizens. In contrast to other core subjects in school, citizenship teaching has aspirations of an essentially moral nature. The authors find congruence between the importance attributed to these values in school curricula and the importance that the pupils attribute to these values. Any desired change in the ratios between the elements in youngsters' moral values must first be implemented in formal and informal educational settings.

Brutin discusses the challenges of teaching the Holocaust in Israeli elementary schools, in which no mandatory curriculum exists. As a result, Holocaust education is mainly coupled with the annual calendar, and is mainly emotional, concentrating on national values. Although numerous teaching aids are available to elementary school teachers in the form of textbooks, literature, and learning kits, the author points to the lack of teachers' systematic knowledge about the Holocaust events.

Brutin explores the use of visual aids in Holocaust education and their role in resolving educators' conflicts between their own reluctance to engage in Holocaust material and their awareness of the significance of Holocaust education. Brutin presents an overview of artwork from the Holocaust era and explains its potential role as a source of information and visual power in Holocaust education.

Ganor's study provides an analysis of the representation of "Holocaust and Heroism" in the "Bamachane army newspaper and in IDF archival documents from 1948–1973. "Bamachane" portrayed changes in construction of the memory of the Holocaust and heroism in the IDF in light of national events in Israel's first three decades. "Bamachane" reflected the IDF's positive attitude towards those who had participated in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Holocaust survivors who testified at the Eichmann Trial, and Righteous Gentiles and expressed a shift in the IDF's attitude towards a heterogeneous perception of "heroism" and the daily struggle for survival. The army newspaper constituted on the one hand a mirror of the dominant public discourse and its attitude to the concept of "heroism", the victims, and the survivors, but on the other hand its contents had a unique slant as they aimed to convey messages and morals that conformed to the army's needs.

Sommer Schneider and Hazan examine the role of contextual factors in a nation's life on the construction and reconstruction of historical facts

and memory of the Holocaust, focusing on the gradual development of Holocaust memory in Poland and the USA. The two case studies suggest that it is often the specific context in a given time that sculpts what the majority knows, thinks, and feels about tragic historical events such as the Holocaust. Therefore, governments and authorities can have a major effect on the public's view of history. As individuals, it is our responsibility to examine what is being transmitted to us as historical facts and lessons; as a society, we should define the purpose of the remembrance and ensure that we embrace historical facts and still fulfill this purpose.

Hazan and Voigtländer address the unique challenges of teaching young people about the Holocaust in the context of German Holocaust education. The authors describe how the German nation has dealt with its past since the end of WWII, with a focus on Germany's evolving emotional and cognitive attitudes toward the Holocaust memory.

In a study of media representations of the Holocaust, Kaźmierczak focuses on the Internet, explores the complex impact of the Internet on Holocaust representations, and discusses the reciprocal relations between the medium and its representations of the past. He proposes future media studies based on an inter-disciplinary perspective that takes into account the diversity of cultural contexts involved.

The study by Klein focuses on the Holocaust in the Haredi press in the first 50 years since independence. The study examines how the official daily Haredi press addressed the Holocaust and how this topic was used in forming Haredi identity. Findings show that as engagement with the Holocaust increased in Israeli society, the topic also increasingly appeared in the Haredi press. The Haredi press played an active role in processing and shaping Holocaust memory in the Haredi community, which was distinct from the official state memory. The Haredi press did so to serve its education aims as a counter culture in Israeli society and to serve its political aims as well.

Wilchek-Aviad and CohencaShiby discuss an educational attempt to cope with the Holocaust from an emotion al angle, by learning about meaningful life at a time fraught with extreme stress and anxiety, as a way of coping with stressful situations. The study highlights the Second Generation's need for meaning in life as a way of coping with levels of anxiety and depression that are part of the Second Generation Syndrome.

Szczerbinski explores the image of Poland in Polish-Jewish and Judeao-Christian discourse, and expresses concern about the true image of Poland from a Jewish perspective. The Jews have an exceptional attitude toward Poland and Poles. For the Poles, the Jewish image of Poland is astonishing, incomprehensible and biased, yet the author stresses that this image is also built on emotions and imaginings.

The second section of this volume focuses on the Trips to Holocaust Sites – Challenges and Dilemmas. Soen and Davidovitch explore the development of youth trips to Poland, on the backdrop of arguments for and against this widespread project that was established in 1988 and whose number of participants has grown steadily since. These trips are sponsored by the Ministry of Education and are a part of the Holocaust curriculum. The Ministry of Education defines the educational and social objectives of the trips and the character of the visits to the sites, trains the teachers and the delegation counselors, and prepares the participants.

A case study by Soen, Davidovitch, and Hzan examines the trips to Poland sponsored by the youth movements that have played a significant role in informal education in the country, predating statehood. Youth groups' resistance activities during the Holocaust constitute a central part of the Holocaust memory for all subsequent generations, and re-main an exemplar of the struggle of few against many. That is the reason that several youth movements in Israel decided to sponsor trips to sites in Poland, to explore their movements' own historic roots. This case study describes the model of the youth movements' trips, and examines the cognitive, moral, and pedagogical effects on youth movement participants. The study concludes that participants on these trips focus on connecting to the local history of the youth movements. Due to the demographic profile of the participants, these trips inevitably compete with school trips, which, due to the high cost of the trips, target the same demographic group. In many ways, the school model and youth movement model of trips to Poland are very similar: Both include preparations for the trip, both are oriented to similar values, and both involve only a specific section of Israeli youngsters. Similarly to school trips, the youth movement trips do not trigger a dramatic change in participants' attitudes, but rather a gradual change that follows the didactic educational axis developed over time, especially in pre-trip and post-trip activities.

Holocaust representation in the IDF is the focus of the next contribution by Davidovitch, Haskel, and Soen, which examines "Witnesses in Uniform" (*Edim B'Madim*), the IDF program of delegations to Poland and whether these trips constitute a means for moral education or indoctrination. The authors examined whether and to what extent the IDF trips enhance the universal and particularistic values of their participants. Findings show that participants' universal values become stronger while the particularistic values (Jewish-Zionist identity, national pride, significance of national symbols) diminish. The authors conclude that the IDF delegations cannot be considered indoctrination but rather are instrumental in instilling values in IDF officers.

The next contribution by Soen and Davidovitch, "Always Remember!" summarizes the trips to Poland that are organized by three distinct organizations, and presents three lessons for Israel. Based on their comparison, participants express a high degree of satisfaction, yet in two settings (youth groups and schools), participation had no real impact on participant's values, although participants stated that they believed that the trip was a significant experience for them.

Fontana presents findings from a case study on Italian school trips to Auschwitz. The program of these trips is developed independently by organizers in various regions; Organizers declare that their trips are directed to the lowest common denominator – the sensory experience of the trip, the arrival, and the sites, in the hope that the experience will trigger some change in the youngsters. This shot-in-the-dark approach is directed in hope that the trips meet their mark. According to the author, the current format of the Italian trips poses a series of risks, including risks stemming from the absence of a sufficient knowledge base and pedagogical weakness. The increase in the number of participants threatens to cause quantity to crush quality, and threatens to lead to a more popularized and banal version of Holocaust memory and fail to achieve the objective of Holocaust teaching, which is to understand the past in order to prevent its recurrence in the present or future.

A comparison of the models used in France and in Israel is presented by Davidovitch, Chaskalovic, Soen and Lalieu, who discuss the challenges of Holocaust teaching and presentation of Holocaust memory in Israel and overseas. The researchers examine Holocaust teaching in Israel and France, with respect to formal and informal

aspects of teaching. More specifically, this paper addresses the question of whether Holocaust teaching is a unifying element for youngsters in schools in Israel and overseas that emphasizes the commonalities of all humans, or whether it is a continuation of the general methodic axis of each school's educational model and credo. This paper reports on part of a large-scale project to evaluate two decades of youth trips to Poland. The comparison between the eight-day Israeli model and the one-day French model confirms the study's hypotheses that the models constitute a direct continuation of existing educational perspectives and moral agendas. The French consider universal values and the cognitive-learning aspect as the objective of the learning process while in Israel it is the particularist aspect that fills the better part of the didactic space. In our opinion, both models require greater balance of universal and Jewish elements.

Section three of this volume focuses on antisemitism. Gross addresses the role of acknowledging of the singularity of the Holocaust in the context of Holocaust teaching and goes on to discuss the connection between Holocaust teaching and anti-Semitism from an international perspective. Gross finds that today's challenge of Holocaust education and civic education is to foster a culture of remembrance, and to help develop mutual understanding and respect among nations and groups.

Gerstenfeld discusses Holocaust justification and distortion. In an increasingly uncertain world, the Holocaust is likely to continue to play an important role as the metaphor of absolute evil. This is all the more so as threats of genocide again appear in public statements. Fighting the main manipulations of the Holocaust requires first understanding the nature of the abuses. This must be followed by exposing the manipulations of the perpetrators, who should then be turned into the accused. Over the past several decades, awareness of the Holocaust in the Western world has increased greatly. Many of its aspects are cited accurately. The broad superficial familiarity with the subject, however, also makes it prone to a multitude of distortions. Its history and terminology are abused for a variety of purposes, including using it as a tool against one's enemies and, in particular, Jews and Israel. Denial of the Holocaust is the best-known and most-studied distortion of its memory. Other categories of abuse include Holocaust justification, deflection, whitewashing, de-Judaization, equivalence, inversion, and

trivialization, as well as obliterating Holocaust memory. Preserving Holocaust memory correctly requires documentation; education; the establishment of monuments, museums, memorials, ceremonies and remembrance days; as well as commemorative projects. Legislation and art are other spheres that have made important contributions.

Milgram addresses Antisemitism and its many interrelated elements: the uniqueness of hatred of Jews and of 20th century Nazi-orchestrated Holocaust, Anti-semitism, from the 6th century before the Common Era (B. C.) until the presented day. The study also presents documented declarations of an Islamic-orchestrated Holocaust, and an analysis of proposed causes and cures.

In the final section of this book, Yaoz Kost discusses the signifcance of Holocaust teaching in Israeli culture and its impact on pupils' attitudes to the nation and its suffering, as well as their empathy for the survivors. Yaoz Kost traces the development of Holocaust curricula in Israel since the 1950s, which mirrored changes in society's attitude to the Holocaust.

Orla-Bukowska focuses on the unique relationship between the Jews, upon whom the Shoah was committed and the Poles, upon whose territories it was committed, as the first stage in the evolution of a new ethos that ensures that the Shoah will never be repeated. She calls for an amended post-Shoah ethos for Poles and Jews, based on a new moral science exercised in new cultural habits. The author discusses the role of the pilgrimages to Holocaust sites within this moral project and its potential to promote a positive human ethos.

The paper by Soen, Davidovitch, and Haber entitled "Memory Begins inside Each of Us" concludes this volume. The authors present a view that in order to achieve the official aims defined by the Ministry of Education, which include reinforcing both universal and particularist values, we must first begin within ourselves, in Israel. Exporting the preservation of memory to Poland has engendered the neglect and exclusion of a large section of the Israeli population, and has distanced us from the Holocaust memory. The authors recommend the development of an inter-disciplinary postHolocaust program that combines the forces in educational systems all over the world, to create uniformity and balance between the particularist aspects (of the Holocaust of the Jews) and the universal aspects (of the events of WWII) in terms of content, and moral and emotional dimensions of the trips.

"Remember the past, live the present, trust the future" (Abba Kovner)

I congratulate Dr. Nitza Davidovitch on her extensive research on youth trips to Poland.

The book and its analysis of Holocaust study programs in Israel and elsewhere, conveying collective and personal remembrance to future generations, are the product of a great deal of work and efforts.

Yet must love of the homeland necessarily be founded on the ruins of European Jewry? Are the death camps crucial for reaching awareness and deep understanding that the true place for all Jews is their country, its construction and love, from whence they may be able to form connections with people from other countries? Are there no educators and teachers here in Israel? I ask myself this question and I have no answer, or rather I have hope that it is unnecessary to travel far in place and time, and that it is possible to learn and remember the Holocaust without leaving Israel's borders, not to forget but to live in a present consisting of deeds and of construction of the future.

We at the Israel-Poland Friendship Association have chosen the motto of "People for People." The association was founded by Holocaust survivors from Poland who believed that interpersonal relationships and friendship are the best guarantee that such unspeakable terrible things will never happen again.

We also remember our one thousand years of common history. The history of our people cannot be comprehended without learning the

history of Poland. We commemorate the past together with the Polish people, for example at the memorial for Mordecai Anielewicz at Vishkov, his hometown, but we form a link to the present. We take part in the Jewish-Polish dialogue held annually on 17 January throughout Poland. We hosted mayors from Poland in March on Israel's 60th anniversary (with the assistance of Israeli local authorities), we encourage academic collaboration. These are only a few examples, but we honestly believe that we are helping create a better future for the people living here and in Poland. I wish that such associations would exist in many other countries as well.

Our young people who travel to Poland will receive extensive historical preparation, to understand the circumstances that led to the terrible tragedy of the Jews and the suffering of other peoples, in the hope that they will return more tolerant of others, compassionate.

Our two nations have similar anthems – "Poland is not yet lost" in the Polish anthem, and in the Israeli anthem – "Our hope is not yet lost".

Once again, congratulations to Dr. Davidovitch on the publication of her book.

Dr. Ilona Cousin,
Chairman of the Israel-Poland Friendship Association