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MEMORIA

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STOP DENIAL

THE HORIZON OF
EVIL - A
COLLABORATION
BETWEEN THE
STUTTHOF MUSEUM
AND THE
SREBRENICA
MEMORIAL CENTRE
ESTABLISHMENT OF

THE
INTERNATIONAL
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We invite all of you to work closely with us. We would be grateful to receive information about events, projects, publications, exhibitions, conferences or research that we should share with our readers. We also accept proposals for articles.

Paweł Sawicki, Editor-in-Chief

Our e-mail: memoria@auschwitz.org

Please do share information about this magazine with others, particularly via social media.

All editions: memoria.auschwitz.org

THE HORIZON OF EVIL – A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE STUTTHOF MUSEUM AND THE SREBRENICA MEMORIAL CENTRE

When we began our partnership with the Srebrenica Memorial Centre in early 2024, we didn't anticipate how profound and impactful this relationship would become. Our shared narrative, centred around the horizon of evil, connects the mechanisms that led to the establishment of Nazi concentration and extermination camps with the genocide in Srebrenica in 1995. Our mutual sensitivity to history and our commitment to educating and honouring the victims laid the groundwork for a strong institutional and educational collaboration.

In September 2024, key representatives from our institution, including Piotr Tarnowski, Director of the Museum, and Ewa Malinowska, Head of the Education Department, visited the Srebrenica Memorial Centre. During their visit, they explored exhibitions depicting the atrocities committed three decades ago, engaged with oral history archives, and learned about the educational initiatives conducted by the Bosnian institution. This visit also provided a platform to discuss potential joint exhibitions and educational projects.

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The fruits of this collaboration became evident during the celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Stutthof concentration camp. This event welcomed representatives from the Srebrenica Memorial Centre, including Amra Begić Fazlić, Deputy Director, and Hasan Hasanović, a genocide survivor who now curates the oral history archive. They participated in a panel discussion titled "The Horizon of Evil. Memory in Education as a Foundation for Future Decisions." Throughout the debate, they emphasised the vital importance of pursuing historical truth and the crucial role that memory plays in shaping the future. The event was streamed online, allowing it to reach a broader audience.

The next phase of our collaboration unfolded in July 2025, when a delegation from the Stutthof Museum in Sztutowo, comprising Piotr Tarnowski, Ewa Malinowska, and Łukasz Kępski, participated in the international conference "Our Story, Our Promise" in Srebrenica. During this multi-day gathering, participants delved into the significance of survivor testimonies, strategies to combat denialism, and effective methods for educating about genocides. Ewa Malinowska presented our Museum's educational activities, highlighting the importance of direct engagement with witnesses and the historical context. Other representatives from our institution emphasised that education in places of remembrance should bridge the past, present, and future—not just as a means of imparting knowledge but also as a vital tool for fostering responsibility and empathy.

STOP DENIAL

Holocaust denial is not just a lie. It is a tool of ideological hatred, spread today primarily through social media. Its aim is the systematic erasure of the truth about the greatest crime in the history of Europe. Thanks to the new “Stop Denial” tool, everyone can now easily take meaningful action to defend historical truth and the dignity of the victims of Auschwitz.

“A decade or two ago, few people would have dared look Holocaust Survivors in the eyes and coldly claim that all their testimonies were lies. Today, there are very few of them left. And so antisemitic, xenophobic, and populist voices grow louder, trying to profit from lies. Let us show that we are greater in number, that truth is stronger. Together, we can stop their hateful words,” said Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Museum and initiator of the “Stop Denial” campaign.

On the dedicated “Stop Denial” website: stopdenial.auschwitz.org, we have prepared a collection of materials that clearly debunk the most common lies propagated by deniers regarding the history of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz.

The assembled documents, photographs, eyewitness accounts, and historical research results demonstrate, step by step, the nature of these falsehoods and manipulations. They equip anyone with tools to respond effectively and accurately to Holocaust denial.

“Fighting deniers online is extremely difficult work, because those who deny the Holocaust ignore all available facts and endlessly repeat the same lies. Their goal is not the search for truth, but the desecration of the memory of the victims,” said Dr. Igor Bartosik of the Museum’s Research Center, author of the online lesson on denialist strategies which served as the foundation for the “Stop Denial” campaign.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

1. If you come across an attempt to deny the truth about the Holocaust on social media—do not stay silent. You may not convince the denier, but remember: others see and read their lies.
2. Go to stopdenial.auschwitz.org website and find the topic that directly refutes the post or comment you encountered.
3. Paste a link to our prepared response underneath that post.
4. If none of our published topics match the denialist claim you found, let us know using the provided form. We will try to prepare answers to the most frequently recurring new lies.

"A decade or two ago, few people would have dared look Holocaust Survivors in the eyes and coldly claim that all their testimonies were lies. Today, there are very few of them left. And so antisemitic, xenophobic, and populist voices grow louder, trying to profit from lies. Let us show that we are greater in number, that truth is stronger. Together, we can stop their hateful words," said Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Museum and initiator of the "Stop Denial" campaign.

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STATEMENTS REGARDING DESECRATION OF THE SITE OF JEDWABNE & HOLOCAUST DENIAL BY GRZEGORZ BRAUN

THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM is outraged by the desecration of the memorial site to the victims of the Jedwabne massacre and the violent disruption of the commemoration of the event. The monument commemorates victims of the massacre carried out on July 10, 1941, when Polish residents of Jedwabne, a small town located in then German-occupied Poland, participated in the murder of several hundred of their Jewish neighbors. These facts have been documented and agreed upon by serious historians in Poland and beyond for many years.

The site desecration involved the placing of seven large boulders with plaques bearing revisionist and antisemitic texts next to the monument. Demonstrators disrupted this year's memorial commemoration of the massacre using loudspeakers and a denialist film, while threatening Jews who had gathered for the observation. The incident coincided with the antisemitic denial of the Holocaust by Polish MP Grzegorz Braun, who stated in a radio interview, "Ritual murder is a fact, and Auschwitz with gas chambers is a fake," evoking the centuries-old blood libel myth. This rhetoric is especially dangerous coming from an elected leader. Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński, Director of the Auschwitz Memorial, appropriately described this as a "conscious lie and an act of ideological, antisemitic hatred."

These events require immediate decisive action to condemn and hold accountable those responsible.

YAD VASHEM is profoundly shocked and deeply concerned by the desecration of historical truth and memory at the Jedwabne memorial site in Poland, where new plaques were recently installed in an apparent attempt to distort the story of the massacre of Jews.

On July 10, 1941, amid the German offensive and the occupation of eastern Poland, local residents from Jedwabne and the surrounding area took part in the brutal murder of hundreds of their Jewish neighbors. This horrific crime has been thoroughly documented through decades of rigorous historical research and numerous survivor and eyewitness testimonies.

Attempts to deny or misrepresent these events are not only a blatant falsification of history and an effort to absolve the perpetrators, but also a profound affront to the victims and a dangerous erosion of Poland's historical and moral responsibility.

Yad Vashem calls on the relevant Polish authorities to remove this offensive installation and to ensure that the historical meaning of the site is preserved and respected. Only by acknowledging and commemorating the darkest chapters of the past can we hope to prevent such atrocities from ever happening again.

**STATEMENT OF DR. PIOTR M. A. CYWIŃSKI, DIRECTOR OF AUSCHWITZ
MEMORIAL ON THE COMMENT MADE BY GRZEGORZ BRAUN,
MEMBER OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

A scandalous and deceitful statement by Member of the European Parliament Grzegorz Braun, in which he denies the existence of gas chambers at the Auschwitz camp, is not only an act of Holocaust denial – a crime prosecuted under Polish law. It is also an act of desecration of the memory of the victims of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp, and an expression of contempt toward Survivors and their families.

The main group of victims of gas chambers at Auschwitz were Jews – those deemed unfit for work by SS doctors immediately upon deportation to the camp. However, the gas chambers were also used as a tool for killing various other groups of prisoners. In the first mass execution using Zyklon B, carried out by the SS in September 1941 and serving as a prelude to the later mass extermination of Jews, a large group of Soviet prisoners of war and Polish prisoners selected from the camp hospital were murdered. SS men also used the gas chambers to kill sick or severely weakened prisoners selected from among all those incarcerated in the camp. It was in the gas chamber at Auschwitz II-Birkenau that over four thousand Roma – primarily women and children – were murdered during the liquidation of the so-called Zigeunerlager in August 1944. Grzegorz Braun's statement is a disgraceful assault on the memory of all those people: Jews, Poles, Roma, Soviet prisoners of war, and all other victims. It is also a slap in the face to those prisoners who risked their lives to document and convey the truth about German crimes, as well as to the Survivors who still bear the trauma of their personal experiences.

Grzegorz Braun's statement constitutes a blatant denial of historical truth and introduces manipulation into public discourse based on antisemitism, falsehood, and hatred. It is a statement unworthy not only of a public figure – in this case, a person holding a seat in the European Parliament. It is simply a shameful statement. There can be no place for such words in political, media, or social space.

We firmly reject the absurd claims that the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum "blocks research" or "offers a pseudo-historical narrative that does not meet the criteria of scholarly historical methodology." This is slander that damages the reputation of our institution and of the entire community of individuals researching the history of Auschwitz. In response to this statement, a lawsuit for defamation will be filed. We emphasize with full force: denying the existence of gas chambers is not only an expression of antisemitism and an ideology of hatred – in Poland it is also a crime. In this matter, a formal notification will be immediately submitted to the public prosecutor's office.

Separate responsibility lies with the media, who hand microphones or cameras to a man who has repeatedly demonstrated that he is incapable of functioning in public life without vandalism, lies, hate speech, and racism. We appeal to the community of journalists to show solidarity in refraining from inviting him to interviews, conversations, and their programs. The media must not be used as a platform for spreading

a deliberate lie that causes pain to so many.

The Museum is currently working on a new online tool, which we hope to launch as early as July, that will enable every internet user to fight more effectively against all forms of Holocaust denial.

The German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz was a site of industrial murder, where approximately 1.1 million people were murdered. Today, the Memorial is preserved thanks to the efforts of the Polish state and the international community – to serve as a warning and reminder of where human hatred can lead. The words of Grzegorz Braun are not a "political provocation," but a conscious lie and an act of ideological, antisemitic hatred. They cannot remain without a resolute response from the state and from all decent people, for whom the memory of Auschwitz

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREBLINKA COUNCIL

In July, Hanna Wróblewska, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, announced the formation of the International Treblinka Council, which will serve as an advisory body to her office. This Council comprises 14 members, each appointed for a term of six years. It is dedicated to supporting initiatives that honour the memory of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who lost their lives in the extermination process during 1942-1943.

The Council's responsibilities include reviewing the proposed script for a permanent exhibition at the Treblinka Museum, which is presently under construction, as well as assisting the Minister in making informed decisions on how to appropriately commemorate the atrocities that occurred at the former extermination camp.

Treblinka Museum. A German Nazi Extermination and Labour Camp (1941-1944)
The museum was established on 1 July 2018. Since 1 November 2018, it has been co-managed by the Mazowieckie Voivodeship and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

The site, known for the mass extermination of Jews between 1942 and 1943, features a striking sculpture created by Franciszek Duszeńko, Adam Haupt, and Franciszek Strynkiewicz. Nearby, a small museum pavilion stands, while construction is now underway for a new building that will house a permanent exhibition and a Wall of Remembrance dedicated to the identified victims. The next phase of activities will involve the thoughtful development of the Memorial Site, incorporating new geophysical discoveries, historical insights, and existing forms of commemoration. The grand opening of the new Museum, featuring a permanent exhibition, is slated for 2027.



Composition of the International Treblinka Council

- **Sara Bloomfield**—director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum since 1999. She is a co-founder of the National Holocaust Institute and the Centre for Advanced Holocaust Studies. Member of the International Auschwitz Council in its II, III and IV terms.
- **Prof. Havi Dreifuss**—head of the Institute for the History of Polish Jews and Israeli-Polish Relations at Tel Aviv University. She is also the Director of the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem. Her research addresses many facets of life during the Holocaust, including survival under extermination, anti-Semitism, religious life, Jewish-Polish relations, and the broader responses to the Holocaust.
- **Prof. Barbara Engelking**—heads the Centre for Holocaust Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences. She chaired the International Auschwitz Council during its III term (2014-2018). She has dedicated over 30 years to Holocaust studies, authoring several important books and numerous articles in both Polish and international journals.
- **Ronald Lauder**—President of the World Jewish Congress. Member of the International Auschwitz Council in its III and IV terms and Chairperson of the Board of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation. His support made it possible to set up professional conservation workshops at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Site. He is also a Member of the Council of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.
- **Erica Lehrer, PhD**—social and cultural anthropologist as well as an exhibition curator. She is a professor at the Department of History and Sociology-Anthropology at Concordia University in Montreal, where she held the Research Chair in Museum and Canadian Heritage Studies from 2007 to 2017.
- **Aldona Machnowska-Góra**—a cultural manager and the deputy mayor of Warsaw, tasked with overseeing matters related to monument protection.
- **Katarzyna Person Wooddin, PhD**—historian and the director of the Warsaw Ghetto Museum. She has led the Research Department of the Jewish Historical Institute and worked on the comprehensive edition of the Ringelblum Archive. An author of five books and numerous articles discussing Holocaust history and its aftermath.
- **Michael Schudrich**—became the Chief Rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź in 2000, later being appointed Chief Rabbi of Poland in 2004. He is a member of the Rabbinical Council of America, the Conference of European Rabbis, and the Rabbinate of the Republic of Poland.
- **Prof. Roma Sendyka**—affiliated with the Department of Anthropology of Literature and Cultural Studies at Jagiellonian University. As a co-founder of the Centre for Memory Cultures, she explores literary and cultural theories, with a focus on visual culture and memory.
- **David Silberklang, PhD**—historian at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research. He serves on the editorial board of *Yad Vashem Studies* and is the editor of the Holocaust Survivors' Memoirs Project series. He is the chief historian for the museum development project, having created the historical concept for the Museum of the History of the Holocaust.
- **Stanisław Stankiewicz**—the President of the Central Council of Roma in Poland, the President of the Parliament of the International Romani Union, and an IRU representative at the UN. He was a member of the International Auschwitz Council during its first term.
- **Adam Struzik**—the Marshal of the Mazovia Province since December 2001.
- **Michał Trębacz, PhD**—director of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. He is a member of the European Association for Jewish Studies (EAJS) and the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES). Since 2017, he has led the Research Department at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.
- **Ada Willenberg**—the widow and curator of the legacy of Samuel Willenberg, who was a sculptor, painter, and a prisoner at the Treblinka extermination camp. Fugitive from the Warsaw Ghetto. A member of the International Auschwitz Council during its IV term. Educator of Israeli youth groups visiting the site of the former Treblinka extermination camp.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEMORY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

"Is Memory Enough in the 21st Century?" was the title of this year's international educational conference, organized every two years by the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

Over 150 experts: researchers, museum professionals, teachers, representatives of memorial sites, and various organizations dealing with the history and memory of World War II, Auschwitz, the Holocaust, and other genocides, gathered from June 30 to July 2, 2025, to reflect on the state of memory and its role in the face of the challenges posed by the modern world.

"We must, as thinking people, break the spiral of hatred. Because the future of the world is in your hands. So—do not be afraid!" with these words of Auschwitz Survivors, the conference began.

The background for the many panel discussions included current crises, uncertainty, polarization, the rise of radicalism, and other troubling social processes.

The conference took place in a year marking the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz, as well as the 20th anniversary of the founding of the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust, established at the request of Survivors.

Marian Turski





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"We are a Center—a place of meetings, dialogue, reflection, and action. From here, one can see both the former Auschwitz camp and the contemporary world. We believe that this is precisely where questions and ideas should arise about how to confront hatred, whose echo still resonates around us. We are education—because we help people have a personal encounter with the history of Auschwitz and the Shoah. This encounter changes not only the understanding of the past, but also one's perspective on the present, welcomed participants Andrzej Kacorzyk, Director of the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust.



memory, understood from a sociological perspective as a product of many individual experiences.

Another discussion allowed participants to hear the voices of minorities and reflect on how minority narratives function in the face of dominant stories, resisting marginalization and erasure.

Conference participants then had the opportunity to meet in small groups to share examples of good practices in the field of memory, reconciliation, peace education, anti-discrimination, and inclusion. Representatives of Homo Faber from Poland, Aegis Trust from Rwanda, Pink Triangle Legacies from the USA, the Anne Frank House from the Netherlands, Terraforming from Serbia, and the Auschwitz Museum presented their projects.

"A great value of this discussion was the chance to talk about projects carried out in different parts of the world, in various contexts, showing that teaching about the difficult issues of our history can be approached in many ways, thus providing inspiration for further educational work," summarized Dr. Agnieszka Kita, moderator of the session and a deputy head of the Auschwitz Museum's Archive.

On the third day, the discussion turned toward the future. The first panel concerned the difficult memory of crimes and its role in times of crisis.

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ANIMAL-INSPIRED TOYS AND JEWELRY DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Animal-inspired toys and jewelry played a vital role during the Holocaust as symbols of comfort, identity, and survival, offering children emotional refuge amid extreme hardship.

These personal objects also served as subtle forms of resistance, used to smuggle valuables or spread anti-Nazi messages.

By studying these items, the author of the latest EHRI Document Blogpost, Anna Batzeli, contributes to the understanding of trauma, memory, and resilience, emphasizing the importance of preserving individual stories within the Holocaust history and memory.

Sophie Turner-Zaretsky and her family were forced into the ghetto when the Germans occupied Lviv. In 1942, her father acquired false documents for her and her mother, enabling their escape. One day, Sophie received a stuffed bear from her mother. "She later named it 'Refugee,' just like she and her mother were refugees of the war. (...) For over 50 years Sophie held on to the bear that she had received as a little girl. It was with her when she was Zofia, a Catholic in Poland; it was with her when she grew up in England; and it was with her when she moved to the United States to begin a new life yet again. The bear was a silent witness to the miracle of Sophie's rescue, rebirth, and success."

Sophie's teddy bear, stuffed animals, animal-shaped puppets, wooden toys, animal-themed board games, and other 'much-loved' toys offered comfort and companionship to children while in hiding, during the Kindertransport, or after liberation from internment camps. Many of these items can be found in museum collections, often accompanied by the personal testimonies of their owners. Similarly, animal-inspired jewelry held deep emotional significance, symbolizing cherished memories, relationships, or milestones. Examining these objects enhances our understanding of the Holocaust, especially considering that their forced confiscation by the Nazis and their collaborators dehumanized Jews, stripping them of their dignity and identity. The loss of these items represented the destruction of precious mementos and symbols of identity, causing profound psychological harm to the victims.

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Animal-themed jewelry and toys often represent personal stories, emotions, and memories of the individuals who owned them. Their study can help us humanize the statistics of the Holocaust. These items reflect the innocence of childhood and the impact of trauma on individuals and families, and they can illustrate subtle forms of resistance and coping mechanisms where individuals find comfort and hope.

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ON PRAYER IN AUSCHWITZ

Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics (FASPE) promotes ethical leadership for today's professionals through annual fellowships, ethical leadership trainings, and symposia, among other means. Each year, FASPE awards 80 to 90 fellowships to graduate students and early-career professionals in six fields: Business, Clergy, Design & Technology, Journalism, Law, and Medicine. Fellowships begin with immersive, site-specific study in Germany and Poland, including at Auschwitz and other historically significant sites associated with Nazi-era professionals. While there, fellows study Nazi-era professionals' surprisingly mundane and familiar motivations and decision-making as a reflection-based framework to apply to ethical pitfalls in their own lives. We find that the power of place translates history into the present, creating urgency in ethical reflection.

Each month one of our fellows publishes a piece in Memoria. Their work reflects FASPE's unique approach to professional ethics and highlights the need for thoughtful ethical reflection today.

*Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.
(T.S. Eliot „Gerontion”)¹*

Arthur Cohen wrote that in the Holocaust “martyrs are all saints, Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Karl Gerstein or six million Jews, but the slayers were all baptized”². This seeming absurdity shifts the Holocaust from the realm of more typical violence, which can at least theoretically be justified by some sort of causal logic (you hurt me, so I hurt you), into the realm of nonsense. The Holocaust was an event during which the baptized, i.e., the saved by God, murdered those chosen by God³. Here is but one absurdity enacted in the camps though a crucial one. It vividly demonstrates the inadequacy of a monotheistic theodicy writ large.

Theodicy attempts to find theological answers to the questions posed by human suffering. Therefore, in some sense the ultimate project of theodicy is to justify suffering. We want God to be good, and we want God to be powerful. But suffering, especially the suffering of the blameless, requires us, voluntarily or not, to question God's goodness and power. Since the Shoah, theologians (especially Jewish ones) have been forced to ask how one can even attempt to justify God's goodness and power after the Holocaust.

I will closely read a passage from Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* that describes a victim of the Nazis praying in Auschwitz. In doing so, I will think about what prayer to God can look like after the Holocaust. I reject theodicy, attempts to explain suffering, but I also reject atheism as an equally unsatisfying answer. Suffering and God must both be taken seriously. Auschwitz was a meaningless event, a nonsense event. But what does that mean? And what does that teach us about suffering in general and our relationship to God when suffering? Knowing what we know, we must talk to patients and congregants who themselves are suffering deeply without explaining it away or rejecting prayer as a resource.

¹ T.S. Eliot, *Gerontion*, <https://beta.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47254/gerontion>.

² Arthur A. Cohen, *The Tremendum as Caesura*, *Cross Currents*, Winter 1980-81. 440.

³ W tym miejscu wypowiadam się z różnych perspektyw kultur chrześcijańskiej i żydowskiej: ogólnie rzecz biorąc, idea, że chrzest jest aktem zbawczym, jest chrześcijańska, a idea wyboru Żydów przez Boga wywodzi się z teologii biblijnej i tradycyjnej myśli żydowskiej.

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I will closely read a passage from Primo Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz* that describes a victim of the Nazis praying in Auschwitz. In doing so, I will think about what prayer to God can look like after the Holocaust. I reject theodicy, attempts to explain suffering, but I also reject atheism as an equally unsatisfying answer. Suffering and God must both be taken seriously. Auschwitz was a meaningless event, a nonsense event. But what does that mean? And what does that teach us about suffering in general and our relationship to God when suffering? Knowing what we know, we must talk to patients and congregants who themselves are suffering deeply without explaining it away or rejecting prayer as a resource.

Midway through his book *Survival in Auschwitz*, Levi describes witnessing a man in his bunk thanking God that he had not been selected to go to the gas chambers the next day. The man, Kuhn, prays next to other men who have been selected. Levi asks a series of questions:

Can Kuhn fail to realize that next time it will be his turn? Does Kuhn not understand that what has happened today is an abomination, which no propitiatory prayer, no pardon, no expiation by the guilty, which nothing at all in the power of man can ever clean again? If I was God, I would spit at Kuhn’s prayer.⁴

These are theodicean questions. The first question, the one about whether Kuhn realizes that he is next, is especially interesting. Whether Kuhn will be next is not a matter of opinion. The overwhelming majority of Jews deported to Auschwitz were murdered. Levi says many times that he himself survived by luck alone. The question is therefore not about prayer when faced with the possibility of extreme suffering and brutal murder but rather prayer when faced with the certainty of suffering and brutal murder.

The second set of questions, those about Kuhn’s understanding, is a more subjective response. Here Levi proposes that “nothing at all in the power of man” can create any sort of redemption in the face of selection. He places prayer in the category of actions humans can take to respond to suffering. In doing so, he implicitly suggests that it is possible for prayer to have power and for God to respond to prayer. However, selection is too powerful, and mitigation, redemption, or reversal of the event is impossible. The event itself contains

4. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*. (New York: Collier Books, 1961). 130.

5. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 103.

6. Cf. Rabbi Irving Greenberg, “*Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust*,” in *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, ed. Steven J. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

7. Emmanuel Levinas, “*Useless Suffering*,” in *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1998)

What is interesting here is that Levi rejects theodicy and prayer but not the concept of God. He understands the absurdity and cruelty of praying in Auschwitz, and God might too. In other words, it is not the idea of prayer or the idea of God that Levi rejects, but rather the type of prayer to God, one which participates in the warped world of theodicy. As we have seen, such is cruelty.

Levi calls on us to reject the paradigm of answers and justifications and, as Jennifer Geddes writes, to embrace the first word of the original title of his book: *if*.⁸ As she writes, in Levi's consistent use of the conditional, he

Is calling us onto a space of ambiguity and uncertainty in which we are called to question [...] the nature of evil, the particular nature of the evil of the Holocaust, a space in which we are called to responsibility—the responsibility to think, question, consider, but also a space in which we must forego the pleasures and comforts of certainty and closure.⁹

When we reconsider the reality of evil, we also are called to think critically about our own responsibility. As a human being who has seen others just like me cause so much suffering, what is the harm that I can do? In what way can I talk to God if God is the creator of evil, and I am someone who bears the potential to do evil?

Yes, if I were Levi, I would spit at Kuhn. Though if I were Kuhn, I might have prayed too. Prayer is the final resource, one of the only resources possible in extremis, when medicine and human mercy no longer apply. In the Jewish tradition, there are many guides to and restrictions on how and when to pray. This fact means that in any situation, we can never be at a loss for words. The ritual steadies us and assures us that not only is there a time for everything but that we are cared for: someone has already prepared the words and actions we need in order to journey through life.¹⁰ That said, even in the most structured of prayers, the Amidah (one of the central prayers of the Jewish tradition, traditionally recited three times a day) there is built-in space for individual prayer that is not pre-written.¹¹ The tradition acknowledges that there are things in each person's life that can only be expressed in the voice of the person in need.

Like love and grief, there is no end to prayer. We can pray in formulas or spontaneously. One can even pray at the moment of death when one cannot do anything else. As much as the thought repels me, that is why I know that I could have been the person praying in Auschwitz. What else was there to do but pray? There was no reasonable chance of escape. Death was expected at every moment. As Levi wrote, if they were not actively dying, they were on the list of those still to die. Kuhn was taking the only action available to him.

But what prayer would I pray? When Levinas wrote against theodicy, he asked in essence, "what's the point?" Is it to convince people that the mechanism still works, that the wicked are punished and the righteous rewarded, despite all the evidence to the contrary?¹² To justify suffering, i.e., to justify the gas chambers? To save God's reputation?

The contortions of an apologetic theodicy only serve to turn our faces away from suffering. Acknowledging that God is not innocent allows us to live in a world replete with very real,

8. *Survival in Auschwitz* was originally entitled *If This is a Man*.

9. Jennifer L. Geddes, "Verbal Images of Evil and (in)Humanity during and after the Holocaust," *Nordisk Judaistik* 29, no. 1 (2018), 32.

10. See the Biblical book of Kohelet.

11. See Talmud Bavli, Berakhot 31a:26, i Avodah Zara 8a:2, oraz Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, 119.

12. Kolejne pytanie, które należałoby zatem zadać, brzmi: Czy olam ha'ba, nadchodzący wiek mesjański (lub jego odpowiednik w innych traThe next question to ask might therefore be: Is olam ha'ba, the messianic age to come (or the equivalent in other traditions) worth the life of your child? Interestingly, when Arthur Cohen addressed this question, he wrote that he would agree with it except for the fact that "history nowhere presents such symmetrical historical options as God or your babe" (Cohen 427). Basically, the obvious answer would be atheism, except that this is a false equivalency. If the Jews had renounced their Judaism in order to save their children, they would have been murdered anyway. It was not an issue of theology. We cannot therefore reject God so easily, but we must continue to rethink the meaning of the reward-punishment mechanism that is so present in Biblical covenantal logic.

¹³ Corinthians 10:13.



experience of suffering. I say this not to compliment myself but to illustrate that (to borrow an idea from Levinas) acknowledging the uselessness of suffering can do spiritual good. If you are someone who believes that everything is a part of God's plan, and that God only gives you as much as you can handle, then you risk being plagued by the fear of failing God. But it is not we who have failed God; it is God who has failed us.

Of course, when someone professes their faith and talks about how much God has done for them, I believe them wholeheartedly—who am I to say otherwise? I have seen the light of God's comfort shine from the faces of the extremely ill and dying, and I know it to be real. And yet even as

I believe that God is present for them, I have double vision. When I look out of one eye I see blessings, abundance, and the reassurance that God is with me. I look out of the other eye, and I see bulldozers pushing my people's emaciated bodies into mass graves at Bergen-Belsen.

I could take away God's power. Instead of a creator-God, God could be, as God has been represented in the Jewish tradition, a tearful God, weeping beside God's children instead of intervening in history. If I diminished God's power, I would take away God's power to do evil and perhaps reduce the power of evil by saying that evil comes from people alone. But if I did that, I would also be diminishing God's power in general. I do not want to do that, because I have witnessed and experienced the power of God's other creation, evil's twin—love. God created the world and everything in it,

14. Emmanuel Levinas, "Prayer Without Demand," in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand, Blackwell Readers (Oxford, UK Cambridge, MA, USA: B. Blackwell, 1989). 231.



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15. T.S. Eliot, "Gerontion," <https://beta.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47254/gerontion>.

REMEMBRANCE AT THE CROSSROADS OF GENERATIONS

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) successfully concluded its first plenary meeting under Israel's Presidency, which was held online from 23–26 June 2025.

Guided by the Israeli Presidency's theme, "Crossroads of Generations," the plenary sessions reflected a shared commitment of IHRA's 35 member countries to passing on the torch of Holocaust remembrance from survivors to future generations.

Reflecting on this theme in his opening speech, Dani Dayan, IHRA Chair during the Israeli Presidency 2025, said:

"Our message today is no less vital than before, perhaps even more so. Our conviction and commitment are no less robust. The areas over which the IHRA has gained a distinct and precious global mandate – research, education, and commemoration of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Roma – demand our accurate, expert-based attention. That is why we must devote efforts and resources to nurturing the next generation of Holocaust researchers, who will help guide us past the Crossroads."

Dani Dayan also urged all countries to pledge their commitment to the Survivors' Declaration, first issued in 2002 at Yad Vashem, and a foundational document of the Israeli Presidency. The Declaration reaffirms the enduring moral voice of survivors, urging the world to uphold human dignity, confront rising antisemitism, and safeguard Holocaust memory. 80 years since the end of the Holocaust, and 23 years since it was conceived, the moral message of this key declaration is remarkably relevant today. Dayan reiterated the Israeli Presidency's call upon concerned persons everywhere to add their personal signatures to the Survivors' Declaration.

In her address IHRA Secretary General, Michaela Küchler, echoed the importance of survivor voices, recalling the story of Holocaust victim Heinrich Michel, a shoemaker from Würzburg, whose memory was preserved through a single photograph and a handwritten testimony by his sister in the archives of Yad Vashem.

"As the last survivors leave us, the IHRA stands at a crossroads. We must remind ourselves that remembrance is not only an act of mourning. It is a moral imperative."

Michaela further called on delegates to rejuvenate, recommit, and refinance the IHRA's mission. Her proposals included launching an IHRA Youth Ambassadors Program to engage new generations and exploring future ways to harness the power of social media.

The plenary opened with a session examining the global rise in antisemitism and its impact on Holocaust remembrance, education, and research. Top experts presented their research on the various forms in which contemporary antisemitism manifests, and IHRA delegates shared insights into how their own professional fields have been impacted by antisemitism, and the steps they have taken to counteract this.

Speaking about the IHRA's important role in addressing antisemitism, Advisor to the IHRA, Robert Williams, said: "The only solution is dialogue and a common resolve to understand and address antisemitism in all its forms. This is the task of the IHRA, because only the IHRA crosses the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Only the IHRA allows experts to drive the agenda, not potentially well-intentioned but nevertheless restricted policymakers."

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ONLINE PLENARY SESSION CROSSROADS OF GENERATIONS



REMEMBRANCE IN THE CLASSROOM: COMMEMORATING THE VICTIMS OF AUSCHWITZ

Last year, I traveled to Washington D.C. to finish master's research concerning American foreign policy and antisemitism in prewar Nazi Germany¹. I spent my last day visiting the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and came across a three-story tower filled with thousands of prewar photographs of Lithuanian Jews. The exhibit, created by Dr. Yaffa Eliach, aims to preserve the faces and dignity of people who were victims of hate. It reminded me of the Auschwitz Memorial's X account, which posts brief biographies of those who suffered in the extermination camp to commemorate victims and educate its worldwide audience.

The need to preserve individual stories of the Holocaust comes at a time when younger generations of people are meeting fewer and fewer World War II veterans and Holocaust survivors than prior generations.

I have been fortunate to meet one of each: Pat Walor², an American World War II veteran in my hometown who fought in Europe, and Kati Preston, a Holocaust survivor who lived in Nazi-occupied Hungary³. While it is important to study overarching themes and statistics in World War II, it is equally important to remember the individuals for who they are and the experiences they carried with them. Therefore, in my first year of teaching history, I was inspired to emulate the work of Dr. Eliach and the Auschwitz Memorial, effectively to honor each victim's story in my classroom. This article examines the ten-week project I conducted with my ninth grade students (14-15-year olds) at Dracut High School in Massachusetts, including their reactions, conversations, and the impact on their learning.

The ten-week project took place during learning units related to the Interwar Period and World War II. The plan was to utilize the Auschwitz Memorial's X posts by sharing individual photos at the beginning of each class. I had five classes, and my daily schedule consisted of four consecutive 45-minute periods, followed by an extended lunch period. I was going to share one individual post each period, and three posts during the extended lunch period, totaling six posts a day. I planned on showing the posts on the class projector. I was to read the brief biographies of victims to each class, including their birth dates and places, any family members, and their death dates and causes, if known. I then printed the posts and hung them on the classroom walls.

On the first day, I presented the project idea to them and I stated to each class, "one of the reasons why we are doing this is because it is one thing to know that 1.1 million people died in Auschwitz and 6 million in the Holocaust, but it is another thing to see the victims' faces and, by seeing a number of individual victims, grasp just how enormous the numbers 1.1 million and 6 million are." After the first day, there were six Auschwitz Memorial posts on one side of the class; it was a small number⁴ that was to grow to 30 by the end of the week and 300 by the end of the project.

¹ Ezekiel Haradji, "Unofficial Influence: Ambassador Dodd and American Foreign Policy Towards the Germans Jews, 1933-1937," Master's thesis (Rivier University, 2024).

² Pat Walor passed away peacefully on June 27, 2025.

³ Cameron Morsberger, "A century of service": Dracut veteran marks 100th birthday," Lowell Sun, August 5, 2023, <https://www.lowellsun.com/2023/08/05/a-century-of-service-dracut-veteran-marks-100th-birthday/>; Caitlin Andrews, "N.H. Holocaust survivor tells story, discusses how it resonates today," Concord Monitor, April 23, 2017, <https://www.concordmonitor.com/Kati-Preston-talks-about-her-experience-as-a-Holocaust-survivor-9362395>



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⁵ Ezekiel Haradji, "Holocaust Remembrance 2025," Youtube, June 9, 2025, educational video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teb2oJlCyCw>

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