



SHALOM HARTMAN מכון  
INSTITUTE שלום הרטמן

# Shaping Memory- Innovative Ritual for Yom Hashoah

Selected translations from the Hebrew guidebook

## Gathering for Holocaust Memorial Day Hagaddah

**Writing and editing: Michal Govrin**

**Writing team: Tamar Elad Applebaum, Ron Margolin, Rani Jaeger, Mali Eizenberg, Mendy**

**Cahana, Aharon Stern, Lior Chen, Miriam Ben-David**

	Introduction	2
<b>I.</b>	<b>The Responsibility to Remember</b>	4
	<b>Invitation</b>	5
	The Voices of Those Who Remember	
	<b>Elegy</b>	6
	These Things I Remember	
	For All These Things I Weep	
	<b>Evil</b>	6
	<b>Standing In Opposition: To Be a Person</b>	7
	Who is the Person?	
	One Who Saves a Single Soul is Like One Who Has Saved the Entire World	
	Choose Life	
<b>II.</b>	<b>Remembering Responsibly</b>	10
	<b>Remember that You Were a Slave</b>	10
	<b>Arising</b>	
	Suggestion for Closing	
	<b>Collection of Songs</b>	11
	Sources	
<b>III.</b>	<b>Reactions to the Gathering</b>	12

## **[4] Introduction**

“In every generation a person is obligated to see themselves as if they...” For the sake of the memory of the Shoah, this ancient commandment is more relevant today than ever. The voices of the last of the survivors still turn to us, but in the near future we will be the ones who must carry the memory of the Shoah and we will be responsible for passing that memory on to following generations.

Personal and national memory is not directed merely to the past, but rather determines the present and the future of an individual and society. We therefore asked ourselves how to ensure that the memory of the erasing of the individual and the attempted destruction of the Jewish People and its tradition during the Shoah, will not be limited to the preservation of trauma.

The ongoing Jewish memory of bondage in Egypt – “Remember that you were a slave in Egypt” – serves throughout Jewish tradition as a continuous struggle against all types of slavery, by way of an entire system of social laws and the observance of Shabbat. Drawing upon this example, we created the “Gathering for Yom HaShoah”, which places at its heart the responsibility to remember and a call for remembering responsibly.

The Gathering before you is an experiential and personal discussion circle created by active participants. Included herein are reading selections, poetry, testimonies, discussion topics, prayers and moments of silence. The many voices of the fallen and the saved, near and far, and of the generations of remembrance from various communities and worldviews are presented on every page. The tradition of remembrance began at the height of the Shoah itself, in the DP camps, and continued in all Jewish communities to this day. The participants add their voices to those who came before, as well as their own memories and thoughts, to form a multifaceted expression of collective destiny and responsibility.

Memory is not a matter confined to books. Its foundation is in the human consciousness of men and women according to their personal manner and across the changing generations. The Gathering is an invitation for every individual among us to take part in creating this living memory.

~ The Gathering team

### **Background**

With a sense of urgency as an Israeli artist, and no less as a daughter of a survivor mother, in 2012 I established at Jerusalem’s Van Leer Institute a unique research group for the study of the construction of Shoah memory. I coined it “Transmitted Memory and Fiction” since memory from a distance in time and space for one who did not experience an event is always a fictional construction. But what will protect memory from the danger of denial? I invited to the research group brain and memory scientists, psychoanalysts, curators, historians and artists,

from various ethnic groups, survivors and their children and grandchildren, for a professional, ethical and essential discussion. After three years of activity, the community was invited to study days and a well-attended interactive exhibition.

The aspiration to share broadly the insights of the study group brought about the creation of a special team to design the “Gathering for Yom Hashoah”. With us were community heads, intellectuals and artists, religious and secular, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, many of them affiliated with The Hartman Institute: Rabbi Tamar Elad Applebom, Professor Ron Margolin, the founder of Beit Tefillah Israeli Rani Jaeger, the historian Mali Eizenberg, Yiddish artist Mendy Cahana, Rabbi Aharon Stern, and many others. Everyone brought their own professional expertise. I myself brought writing and editing from my experience as an author and director of Jewish theater.

So began the process of thought, discussion and writing for the team. The many voices are echoed in the editing and design of this work, and serve as an invitation for everyone who participates in the Gathering to add their voice and story.

~ Michal Govrin

## Part I: The Responsibility to Remember

### [8] Invitation

We were not there to experience it, to suffer it,  
And yet we willingly take upon ourselves  
The responsibility to remember, and to remember responsibly.  
And even if I have no words and you have few,  
And whether I am distant or I am near,  
And whether we are close kin of theirs or whether  
We can find no kinship, we will be assembling a place  
Within ourselves, among ourselves, a meeting place.  
We are here today.

*The participant will say their names and the names of the places of origin of their family and ancestors*

### [9] We were not there to experience it, to suffer it, and yet

**Let us remember in this Gathering the holocaust that annihilated one third of the Jewish people,**

Six million women, men and children.

**Let us remember** the extermination decree

Against every Jew, wherever he may be,

Against every human being for being different –

We are all survivors of the extermination decree.

**Let us tell** about the Jewish Communities that had been scattered, uprooted and wiped out,  
From east and west, from Europe and from the Arab Countries.

**Let us mourn** the murdered,

**Light** a candle in their memory.

**Let us look straight** at the evil, for "at the entrance, sin is lying" then and today,

And against it **exalt** the humaneness

Of women, men and children

And of the righteous among the nations,

**And praise** the rising of the uprooted,

The deported and the survivors.

And then **let us ask** ourselves, how should we regard our being here today,

IN A PLACE WHERE THERE ARE NO MEN, STRIVE THOU TO BE A MAN

**Let us hold out our hands and raise up.**

Let this Gathering be our remembrance and responsibility.

**[9] We listen to the survivors' call:**

*[If a survivor is present at the Gathering, he or she will read out The Survivors Declaration]*

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.

(from The Survivors declaration)

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

**[10] The Voices of Those Who Remember**

**[11] If This Is a Man, by Primo Levi**

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 commend 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.

From the book *Is This a Man?* (Orion Press, 1959)

## Elegy

### [18] **For All These Things I Weep**

*"For all these things I weep; tears flow down my cheeks. No one is here to comfort me"  
(Lamentations 1:16)*

And even if I have no words and you have few, our reach falling short and our language stumbling,  
We will awaken the memory of some fraction of a fraction of mankind's most enormous slaughter.  
We will invoke, with the very silence of our lips, some small part of an indescribable ocean of torments.

### [20] **Each of Us Has a Name** by **Zelda**

Each of us has a name  
given by God  
and given by our parents...

Each of us has a name  
given by the sea  
and given by  
our death.

***Each participant will light a memorial candle on the table of candles inside the circle, and recite names of family members.***

### [24] **Evil**

*See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction (Deuteronomy 30:15)*

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

### [25] **All There Is to Know About Adolf Eichmann**, by **Leonard Cohen**

EYES:.....Medium  
HAIR:.....Medium  
WEIGHT:.....Medium  
HEIGHT:.....Medium

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES...None  
NUMBER OF FINGERS:.....Ten  
NUMBER OF TOES.....Ten  
INTELLIGENCE.....Medium  
What did you expect?  
Talons?  
Oversize incisors?  
Green saliva?  
Madness?

[28] "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 horror show from Islamic State 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 "Where Are the Individual Voices?" and "Facing Evil", by Michal Govrin

### [32] **Standing In Opposition: To Be a Person**

*In a place where there is no man, strive to be a man (Pirkei Avot 2:5)*

#### **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 not from horror scenes but of 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 Holocaust and as a young Holocaust survivor in the young state of Israel. His books describe Jewish life in Europe before, during and after World War II.

The above was said on April 2012, during a meeting with a research group in Van-Leer Jerusalem Institute.]

**Who is the Man Who Desires Life** (Psalms 34:12–15)

Who is the man who desires life,  
who loves days to see goodness?  
Guard your tongue from evil  
and your lips from speaking deceitfully.  
Shun evil and do good,  
seek peace and pursue it.

**[34] From the Diary of ETTY HILLESUM:**

..."the misery here is quite terrible and yet, late at night when the day has slunk away into the depths behind me, I often walk with a spring in my step along the barbed wire and then time and again it soars straight from my heart – I can't help it, that's just the way it is, like some elementary force – the feeling that life is glorious and magnificent, and that one day we shall be building a whole new world. Against every new outrage and every fresh horror will shall put up one more piece of love and goodness, drawing strength from within ourselves.

Letters from Westerbork, 1941-1943

**[35] Sabbath candles in Auschwitz** by Rivka Cooper, a resistance fighter from the Krakow ghetto

When we came to Birkenau on January 18, 1943, they put us in blocks.  
We got wooden shelves on which we had to lie down and sleep.  
One of the first things my friends and I did was to find acquaintances among the survivors, and there were some. One of the first things we asked for were two candle ends.  
On Friday night we gathered on the top shelf in our block.  
We were ten to twelve girls. We lit the candles and silently began to sing Sabbath songs, not knowing what was going on around us. After a short pause we heard silent weeping.  
It turned out that from all over the place – Jewish women who were there for months and even years, gathered around us on the adjacent shelves and listened to our singing. Some of them came down and asked us to let them bless the candles.

**[36] One Who Saves a Single Soul is Like One Who Has Saved the Entire World**

[36] 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.

## **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 upheld 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 the m humanity dimmed.

Remember, People of Israel, their grandness  
Of spirit, their heroism and their pure hearts.  
May God bind their souls in the bundle  
Of life, and may I t 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

(tr. Yaron Ben-Ami)

## [40] **Part II: Remembering Responsibly**

### [41] **Remember that You Were a Slave**

[42] **And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt**  
(Deuteronomy 15,15)

[43] **Discussions and Study groups**, Selected subjects:

Responsibility for the unprivileged in our society

The Memory of the perished Jewish World

Jewish identity and solidarity

Succumbing to Evil

Faith after the Holocaust

Standing in Opposition, here and now

[for example] **In teams: Read the questions and choose one or two to discuss.**

- How can we preserve and pass forward the memory and the values of **Jewish worlds that have been laid waste?**
- How can we learn to protect ourselves from the human soul's potential for evil?
- Racism is the first step toward obliterating the other. How should we deal with expressions of racism among ourselves, and among those around us?
- How can we preserve the memory of the Holocaust victims without self-victimization — without becoming eternal victims?

**Plenary assembly and discussion: What, for us, is the meaning of *remembering responsibly*?**

[46] **Arising**

[47] **I Believe** (Shaul Tchernichovsky, 1892)

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

**We'll extend a hand to the person sitting next to us, and will rise**

**Blessed are You G-d, Master of the Universe Who created man**

**Here ends the Gathering for the Remembrance of the Holocaust and of Mankind**

### III. Reactions to the Gathering

Dear Rani,

Yesterday I facilitated a Gathering with parents and teachers from my class. Words cannot describe my feelings from this evening. The participation, everyone's involvement, the connection between parents and their children were wonderful. More than anything, you get the sense that you are participating in a magical and special moment.

Omer Ben Ari  
Reali School, Haifa

---

Shalom Michal,

On Yom Hashoah evening we made a Gathering in our community in Modiin. In addition to this, I decided to ask my Tel Aviv law firm to do a Gathering in our office during the day of Yom Hashoah.

I approached the Gathering at work with significant reservations. The participants are – if you forgive me the generalization – cynical, lacking in patience for matters unconnected to work, and very time constrained. I was therefore very uncertain regarding their reaction...

Though it was not an obligatory event in the office, around 40 lawyers and an additional 20 support staff joined. They were surprised by the book and the process of the Gathering, but participated fully. The apex occurred when everyone shared what community they came from, and some shared the story what happened to their families. Near the end of this stage, one of the participants shared that his grandmother was one of the righteous Gentiles, who after the Shoah came to Israel, married an Israeli and converted to Judaism. Most of us did not know this story, and it was a big surprise. Later, I asked him to read the prayer for the righteous gentiles that Rani wrote. Never have I seen so many lawyers sitting in a room in such awed silence as when he read this prayer.

The responses were very positive – and from many people, who were deeply moved. I think that in workplaces such as mine the need is very great to mark Yom Hashoah, and the Gathering is a highly approachable way to do so.

Moshe Yinon

# New Ways to Commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day in Israel

## THE BLOG / HUFFINGTON POST

04/29/2016 01:06 pm ET

- [Ron Kronish](#) Founding Director, Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel

Recently, one of my friends sent me an email, saying that his daughter just returned from a high school study tour to Poland and was shocked by the overly nationalistic messages that were propagated during that trip. As a negative reaction, she came home and emphasized in her own reflections the universalistic messages that she learned on her own from this experience. While the Shoah was a unique Jewish experience, it was at the same time a time when people from many other national, religious and gender persuasions were also massacred by the Nazis and their accomplices.

And then I opened my morning newspaper and read that one of the leading Holocaust educators in Israel was saying very much the same thing. In an article published in Haaretz (April 27, 2016), Director of the Museum of the Ghetto Fighters' House, Dr. Anat Livne, strongly criticized high school trips to Poland and the March of the Living program:

Such a trip is important only if it's part of an entire process of guidance, study, in-depth involvement in the memory of the Holocaust. The moment it becomes a mass project, mechanical, wholesale and without genuine internalization, the trips should be eliminated. The way it's done today, both in the high schools and in the army, is not to my taste at all.

I couldn't agree more. These trips have been contributing to a dangerous trend of increasing ultra-nationalism in recent decades that is separating us from the rest of humanity and increasing xenophobic attitudes among Jewish youth in Israel (and the Diaspora).

The same can be said about most Yom Hashoah ceremonies in Israel today. Dr. Livne criticized these gatherings as "too massive and triumphant" and they lack any humanistic messages that should be part of Holocaust Memorial Day. When asked about what alternatives can be suggested to these ceremonies, she responded:

A memorial event that begins with a modest ceremony centered on study and thinking. For the first time, there will be a discussion entitled "A Different Gathering on Holocaust Day." We'll talk in small groups of survivors and their children, as well as friends of the museum from the kibbutz and the surroundings, about texts related to the Holocaust and to shaping memory.

Actually this won't be the first time that this will happen in Israel. Last year, I was fortunate to participate in "a different gathering for Holocaust Day" in Jerusalem, which was one of 10 experimental groups organized by a team of scholars and practitioners from all over Israel, led by Michal Govrin of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. My wife

and I attended such a gathering at Kehillat Zion in Jerusalem, led in a meaningful and participatory way, by Rabbi Tamar Elad Applebaum, spiritual leader of this new religious community in Jerusalem. It was by far the most meaningful Yom Hashoah commemoration experience that I have ever had in my 36 years in Israel. Since we were a small group, each and every one of us was able to share memories and thoughts about members of our families and our communities who were affected by the Shoah.

How did this come about?

Govrin gathered a group of experts from a variety of disciplines, including historians, artists, curators, brain scientists, clerics and psychoanalysts, each of whom also embodied a specific population group (ultra-Orthodox, Ashkenazi, Sephardi, etc.). Following three years of monthly meetings at Van Leer, the group came up with a format for a ceremony that has been designed to be experiential and to spur active involvement on the part of participants, based on the model of the Passover Seder.

Each gathering is planned to be carried out by the participants themselves under the guidance of a moderator. In an interview in Haaretz last year, Govrin explained:

It's a modular format, and each 'community' will be able to choose the texts it finds appropriate. There will be times of singing and also times when the participants will be invited to share their thoughts and memories.

There will be a small intimate gathering at Kehillat Zion in Jerusalem again this year on the evening of Holocaust Remembrance Day. And, at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute a revised version of the ceremony, based on the success of last year's pilot version, will also take place. For Hebrew readers, it is possible to download to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day at home with family and friends or in a community. (an English translation is being prepared for the future). In addition, the new ceremony will be implemented in several new places in Israel this year, including the Museum of the Ghetto Fighters House in the north of Israel and in communities in Tel Aviv, Modi'in and at a central event in downtown Jerusalem.

It is now possible to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day in Israel in a sensitive, serious and substantive way, with serious reflection and personal memorializing, without all the triumphant nationalist fanfare that has gone along with it for so many decades.