

# Guides as Mediators of Memory: On the Holocaust and Antisemitism – 75 Years Later

Ruth Dorot<sup>1</sup> & Nitza Davidovich<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Architecture, Ariel university, Israel

<sup>2</sup> Department of Education, Faculty of Social and Humanities, Ariel University, Israel

Correspondence: Nitza Davidovich, Department of Education, Faculty of Social and Humanities, Ariel University, Israel.

Received: July 30, 2021

Accepted: September 13, 2021

Online Published: September 15, 2021

doi:10.5430/ijhe.v11n2p52

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v11n2p52>

## Abstract

This article deals with the relationship between the Holocaust and antisemitism, focusing on the events of 2020-2021. The point of departure is the fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, held under the slogan: "Remembering the Holocaust, fighting antisemitism". The event took place at the invitation of Israel's president, Reuven Rivlin, in advance of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 23, 2020). Content analysis of the speeches given by presidents and prime ministers from around the world reinforce the insights of the Holocaust and the association with current-day antisemitism. In March 2020 the COVID-19 virus appeared, and a wave of antisemitism surfaced with it. Analysis of contents that appeared on websites and social networks reveals vitriolic antisemitism against Jews as generators of the virus, being the virus themselves.

This study utilized the method of anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926-2006), who established the interpretive approach to anthropology for analyzing culture contents. This, with regard to content analysis in general and to the contents of social networks and their contribution to antisemitism, in particular. Operation "Guardian of the Walls" in Gaza in 2021 further fanned antisemitism. Content analysis of websites and social networks portrays the Jewish soldier as a Nazi soldier and all Jews as murderers – with all the Holocaust symbols and Holocaust language.

The study seeks to examine whether and to what degree the educational system in general and guides of youth trips to Poland as mediators of memory in particular, are prepared for the educational challenge of eradicating antisemitism in the post-Holocaust era. The research findings show that the challenge still awaits us. Education is an essential instrument in the battle against antisemitism but the educational system, both formal and informal, is not prepared.

**Keywords:** memory, Holocaust, antisemitism, COVID 19, "Guardian of the Walls", guides to Poland

## 1. Introduction: The Holocaust and Antisemitism – A New Era?

This article focuses on one insight of the Holocaust events, and that is the association with current-day antisemitism. Antisemitism is a relatively new concept coined by German journalist Wilhelm Marr in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The concept redefined the long-time phenomenon of Jew hatred, rooted in ancient times. The phenomenon, which has been called the "longest hatred", has evolved throughout history, but in general it may be said to have existed consistently in Christian European countries, Islamic countries, and even areas where no Jews lived. Antisemitism is a type of racism, namely a worldview that presumes to portray people scientifically as divided into different races from birth. Racism tends to ascribe to each race unchangeable moral qualities and features (exploitation versus manual labor, untrustworthiness versus integrity, and others). It also divides humanity into a hierarchy of races, from superior to inferior. Racism usually leads to behavior that discriminates between people based on their racial origins. <https://www.yadvashem.org/he/education/educational-materials/research-papers/racism-and-antisemitism.html>.

In the current context we mean the official and declared antisemitism of German Nazism. From 1933-1945 the Holocaust occurred in Europe. This was a systematic and organized series of murders of the Jewish people by the German Nazis and their collaborators in the various places they reached. Led by Adolf Hitler, Germany was called the Great German Empire and the Final Solution was born – systematic planned annihilation of approximately six

million Jews. This annihilation was carried out in the context of the generations-long traditional antisemitism, but it was primarily based on the pseudo-scientific racist theory, which ranks humanity on a hierarchy of superior to inferior. The difference between this racism and traditional racism is its institutionalization.

<https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki>

Seventy-five years after the liberation of Auschwitz, the 2020 World Holocaust Forum was held, with speeches by presidents, prime ministers, and leaders of the free world. Content analysis of their words raises the need to stand up against antisemitism.

Not two months after the conference we were exposed to antisemitic events in their 2020 form. The COVID-19 virus emerged – together with a wave of antisemitic events, the pretext being that the Jews had brought the COVID-19 pandemic. Not a year later, once again – 2021 antisemitism, manifested in actions and contents, in Israel and overseas, on websites and social networks, following the events in Gaza – Operation “Guardian of the Walls”.

Assuming that education is an important tool for eliminating antisemitism, particularly in light of the fact that the latter also appears in schools and academic institutions, the question this study contends with is: Are the educational systems and guides of the journey to Poland prepared for the challenge of eradicating antisemitism in the post-Holocaust era?

This study utilized the method of anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926-2006), who established the interpretive approach to anthropology for analyzing culture contents (1990, 2005). Geertz was one of the greatest anthropologists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He established the interpretive approach to anthropology in the 1980s, which was a theoretical breakthrough with regard to the crisis of representing the other in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The method of analyzing culture contents deviated considerably from the limits of the anthropological discipline and even from the social sciences. In the current study we analyzed the speeches of world leaders on antisemitism at an event held for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, as well as performing content analysis of the discourse on social networks, which reflects contemporary culture.

Moreover, studies on guides to Poland and expectations of guidance during the journey, both from the Israeli aspect and from the universal aspect, show that the emotional aspect is the most meaningful for young people (Davidovitch & Soen, 2015; Soen & Davidovitch, 2012). The current study transfers most of the discourse and interest in lessons learned from the Holocaust, on the Jewish and universal sphere, to the cognitive and value-based aspect and its manifestation in antisemitism.

### *1.1 Seventy-Five Years Later*

Ninety-two-year-old Holocaust survivor Yvonne Engelman, now a resident of Australia, who returned to the camp where her relatives had been murdered, related that “we could hear children coughing, crying, and choking on the gas, smell the human flesh and the fear and the threat that maybe you would be the next victim”. <https://news.walla.co.il/item/3337361>.

These words were said as a preface to the events of January 23, 2020: The Fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, held under the slogan: “Remembering the Holocaust, fighting antisemitism”. The event was held at the invitation of Israel’s president, Reuven Rivlin, in advance of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and of International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The unusually large and significant event was held on the background of increasing old-new antisemitism around the world; the constant antisemitism, particularly in Europe, which has intensified recently, the further we get from the events of the war. These displays of hatred and violence should be severed as early as possible, and therefore it was important to condemn them publicly at Yad Vashem, located as it is in Israel’s capital. To mark the historical date, dozens of leaders and dignitaries came from all over the world: kings, princes, presidents, representatives of international organizations, the Vice President of the United States, the Prime Minister of Israel, the President of Israel, dignitaries from Israel and from other countries. “The Holocaust was the most deadly manifestation of antisemitism. It was the outcome of an extreme racist ideology, adopted by a modern state, to blame one group for all collective ills”, said Yad Vashem Chairman, Avner Shalev. “Following the Second World War, the international community formulated universal principles and established international organizations with the aim of preventing crimes against humanity. We must identify, learn, and understand ways in which antisemitism is continuing and spreading in recent years. We must all be aware of contemporary manifestations of antisemitism and fight it resolutely wherever it emerges. It is the responsibility of humanity as a whole, and particularly of the leaders who have gathered here at Yad Vashem, to act to combat antisemitism, racism, and xenophobia”.

<https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5568721,00.html>

Many important speeches were given at the event. These justified this impressive assembly, whom others criticized as a demonstrative event. Several speeches, such as those of the presidents of Germany, France, Russia, the US, and others, aroused a discourse about antisemitism. We would like to bring here the gist of several main speeches given at this special event.

The natural expectation of an event of this type was to hear an honest speech of apology and responsibility by the Polish president, on whose land most of the atrocities were carried out, with the city of Auschwitz continuing its daily routine beside the constantly burning furnaces and ovens, while many Poles also collaborated with the Nazis.

Instead, President Andrzej Duda cancelled his attendance. The cancellation was rooted in the crisis between the two countries, which emerged in 2018. Poland enacted a law that sought to restrict all discourse about the part of the Poles in the Nazis' crimes. After a controversy, the law was cancelled following a joint declaration signed by Israel and Poland. This declaration says that many Poles helped save Jews and only a minority persecuted them. Yad Vashem was not satisfied with this compromise, to say the least, and claimed that it embodied a falsification and distortion of history, detracting from the memory of the Holocaust.

This was followed a year later by the statement of Foreign Minister Israel Katz whereby "Poles suckle antisemitism with their mothers' milk", which added to the crisis.

Jewish American historian Jan Tomasz Gross, born in Poland, supports these accusations in his study on the Jedwabne massacre, published in his book *Neighbors* (2001). The book describes the murder of the Jews in 1941 by Poles rather than Germans. The book aroused a raging argument in the scientific community, among the general public, outside Poland and within the country, which was not happy with it. Another study of his, named *Fear*, deals with antisemitism in Poland after the Holocaust, another controversial issue in Poland.

By cancelling his attendance, Duda protested the refusal of the organizers – the World Holocaust Forum Foundation together with Yad Vashem, to let him speak, while others were allowed to do so. He protested the diminishing of Polish suffering at the hands of the Nazis, while in his opinion they had paid the heaviest price. [Haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.8371485](https://Haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.8371485). Another president who added a special angle, but this time a positive one, was Ukrainian president Volodymyr, Zelensky, who gave up his seat and that of his delegation at the ceremony in favor of Holocaust survivors. "...These people deserve great respect, more than anyone else". [Makorishon.co.il/news/199239](https://Makorishon.co.il/news/199239) (May 6, 2021).

In contrast to the absence of the Polish president, the highlight of the entire event was conspicuous – the moving, brave, and surprising speech of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

Already at the beginning of his speech, the president linked the events to the present day and referred to the rise of the radical right wing in his country: "I wish I could say that we Germans have learned from history once and for all... But... I cannot say that when only a thick wooden door prevents a right-wing terrorist from causing a bloodbath in a synagogue... on Yom Kippur". He further added: "Germany's responsibility does not expire. We want to live up to our responsibility... but I cannot say that when hatred is spreading" (Kobi Nachshoni: January 23, 2020). The relevance for current times is particularly important due to the past: "Racial antisemitism in Germany saw the biological Jew as an unchangeable law of nature; even if revealed years later and he himself did not know or if one of his parents or grandparents was Jewish, he is forever Jewish, irreversibly so. Indeed, in previous generations as well there were Jews who insisted on their faith and revered God publicly. But weak-natured Jews could choose for themselves; now the choice was taken from them. The law of nature reigned, rather than the law of history and of society" (Baron, 1995).

He began his speech with the blessing of "Shehecheyanu" ("who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season") and continued with some more sentences in Hebrew: "What a blessing, what a gift, it is for me to be able to speak to you here today at Yad Vashem". The rest of the speech was in English, ending once again with the blessing of "Shehecheyanu". Reciting the blessing in Hebrew is a special gesture designating closeness. He mentioned the eternal flame that constantly burns at Yad Vashem, which symbolizes the remembrance and suffering of the millions. In his speech he mentioned the names of athletes who perished, such as Samuel Tytelman and his sister Rega, or Ida Goldish and her three-year-old son Vili, who were deported from the Kishinev Ghetto. In order to give a face and character to the millions the president chose to relate to individuals who had a heart, feelings, a family, and an entire life. Speaking directly, clearly, and resolutely, he noted that "Germans deported them, Germans burned numbers on their forearms, Germans tried to dehumanize them, to reduce them to numbers, to erase all memory of them in the extermination camps. They did not succeed. Samuel and Rega, Ida and Vili, were human beings, and as human beings they live on in our memory". Yad Vashem gives them, as it says in the book of Isaiah: a

monument (matzeva – i.e., yad) and a name (shem). The president admitted that these terrible crimes were committed by Germans, people of his nation. Steinmeier recognized the fact that the industrial murder of the six million is the most terrible crime in modern history. The murderers were Germans of his nation, who took the lives of fifty million people.

“Seventy-five years after the liberation of Auschwitz, I stand before you all as president of Germany, I stand here laden with the heavy historical burden of guilt”. Side by side with the clear recognition of the guilt he also expressed gratitude for the survivors who were reaching out a hand in peace and for the right to speak here before them. The president was moved by the spirit of reconciliation and flourishing Jewish life in Germany. This speech recognizes the existence of human evil. Current-day antisemites are other people in other times, but the evil is the same. “Never again!” declared the German president. “Heads of state and government, I am grateful that together we make this commitment today: A world that remembers the Holocaust – a world without genocide. “Who knows if we will ever hear again the magical sound of life? Who knows if we can weave ourselves into eternity? Who knows?”. Salmen Gradowski wrote these lines in Auschwitz and buried them in a tin can under a crematorium. Here at Yad Vashem they are woven into eternity. Salmen and many others were all murdered, their lives were lost to unfettered hatred, but our remembrance of them will defeat the abyss”. <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5665227,00.htm>

This is a constitutive speech that contains both recognition of the sin and assumption of responsibility, public admission of the despicable crime, recognition of historical responsibility, a promise to stand by Israel and defend the lives of Jews, and a message for all generations. (Further on, we shall relate to the guides that impart the message for the future in their educational work as guides in Poland.)

Russian president Vladimir Putin came to the important encounter after inaugurating the monument commemorating those killed in the siege of Leningrad. Putin was undoubtedly one of the most important and major figures to have taken part in the event: the representative of one of the strongest superpowers, with involvement in our region and deep political-strategic interests.

He expressed joint responsibility for the grave wound left by the Holocaust. In his speech, he called Auschwitz a hell where millions were murdered intentionally and systematically. An important point in his speech was the recognition and noting of the many collaborators with the Nazis. The president acclaimed Soviet actions taken to liberate Europe, which came at the price of twenty-seven million casualties. “The final solution is one of the blackest moments in world history”.

He mentioned displays of hatred and nationalism that must be battled. He ended his words by saying: “We shall never forget!” [Srugim.co.il/412878](http://Srugim.co.il/412878)

The fact of Europe’s liberation by the Soviets, emphasized by President Putin, was reinforced by the president of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron. He cited the words of Simone Veil, whereby for the people of Europe, tired of war, the liberation was not even considered an event, it was barely a relief. The Holocaust is unforgivable and unthinkable.

Macron touched on an important point, particularly in light of Holocaust denial, which is the authentic relating of the events by the survivors. It must not be forgotten, it is necessary to document, as Shimon Dubnow requested of his friends in the Riga Ghetto: “Brothers, write down everything, record everything, so that we shall tell the next generations”. He also noted and mentioned the passion of the “prophets of truth”: Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, present at the ceremony, who hunted down the murderers. The French president made a commitment: “Never again, never again! [Il.ambafrance.org](http://Il.ambafrance.org)

The UK was represented by Prince Charles. He too stressed the extent of the atrocities and evil. The prince noted the survivors who live in his country, who built a new life and are an inspiration for the world. His family’s personal connection to the Holocaust was also mentioned at this important event. He noted the story of his grandmother – his father’s mother – Princess Alice, who was recognized as one of the Righteous among the Nations. At risk to her life, she hid a Jewish family in her palace in Athens. He believes that it is important that the memory of the Holocaust remains alive and not only as a historical event, since the tragedy was Jewish and global. [Israelhayom.co.il/726995](http://Israelhayom.co.il/726995)

US Vice President Mike Pence also contributed to the list of prominent speeches, as the representative of the large superpower. He called the Holocaust “The dark stain on human history, the greatest evil ever perpetrated”. “I can attest firsthand, from this past year, one cannot walk the grounds of Auschwitz without being overcome with emotion and grief. One cannot see the piles of shoes, the crematoriums, the lone boxcar... and those grainy photographs of men, women, and children being sent to their deaths without asking: ‘How could they?’. Today we mourn with those who mourn... We remember the faces of the 6 million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust”.

One of the most important points in his speech, for the future, was recognizing the lack of involvement and the inaction of the strong Allies who could have taken action. He noted the two million American soldiers killed in the war and the Righteous among the Nations who risked their lives to save Jews, as well as the example they set for the next generations. The Vice President also formed a direct link between the Holocaust and the existential danger confronting Israel today – the Iranian threat. He specifically mentioned Iran’s intention to eradicate Israel. By doing so he dispersed the haze around the denouncement of Antisemitism displays as a mere slogan. He is indeed right; a general statement does not come close to his demand of all countries to stand by Israel and holding them responsible for preventing realization of the threat.

<https://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1001316015>

In his speech Pence said: “We gather to fulfill a solemn obligation – an obligation of remembrance: to never allow the memory of those who died in the Holocaust to be forgotten by anyone, anywhere in the world... he further added that “We must be prepared to confront and expose the vile tide of antisemitism that is fueling hate and violence all across the world”.

<https://www.kipa.co.il/%D7%97%D7%93%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%AA/%D7%9E%>

He concluded his speech in Hebrew with the well-known quote “He who brings peace in His high places, may He bring peace on us and on all of Israel”.

“Words, words, words”, Hamlet’s reply in Shakespeare’s popular play “Hamlet” is well-known. In the second act, scene two, Hamlet answers Polonius’ question “What do you read, my Lord?” We all understand that words appear, emerge, are voiced and uttered out of hand. Nevertheless, and all the more so, it is necessary to say and to remind, it is necessary to repeatedly say things even if they are heard only by a few.

Only two months after this conference, the COVID-19 pandemic erupted – and antisemitism reared its head once again.

## *1.2 Antisemitism 2020-2021*

### *1.2.1 The Virus of Antisemitism Rears Its Head – on Antisemitism in the COVID Era*

Towards International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Ministry of the Diaspora published the Antisemitism Report for 2020 and revealed a grave forecast for 2021 (Bersky, January 24, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic spread and affected a very wide range of issues. Aside from the severe harm to global economies, antisemitism expanded around the world as well, with a sharp rise in the number of antisemitic and violent incidents against Jews. This is evident from a special report published by the Ministry of the Diaspora towards International Holocaust Remembrance Day. According to the Ministry of Diaspora’s Antisemitism Report for 2020, the COVID pandemic was utilized to spread antisemitic conspiracies against Jews and Israel throughout the world. The Ministry of Diaspora notes that those behind these conspiracies claim that the Jews spread the virus in order to gain financially from the chaos created and to form a new global order.

The report revealed several significant points. Among other things, a rise of dozens of percentage points is evident in 2020 in the spread of antisemitism on the web. In addition, attempts were made to link the Jews to the COVID pandemic under a hashtag comparing the State of Israel to the COVID virus. According to the Ministry of Diaspora, this appeared to be an Iranian campaign that was shared 250,000 times (including by Iranian leader Khamenei) and viewed by hundreds of millions on Twitter.

The Ministry of Diaspora explains that the main sphere of antisemitic expressions moved from the physical to the virtual expanse. According to the report, “further development of the existing trends is expected to lead to a sharp rise in cases of antisemitism and violence against Jews and Jewish targets around the world, posing a significant challenge for Jewish communities, with an emphasis on the Jewish community in the US, due to the COVID crisis and social polarization”.

“In Germany”, the report indicates, “another rise in antisemitism was diagnosed, also among the police and security forces. From 2017-2020, 380 actions were taken against radical right-wing activists within the German Police. Investigators within the police found evidence of policemen wearing Nazi uniforms and symbols and many scandals were uncovered involving antisemitism and racism within the ranks of the German Police”.

In Europe in general, the Ministry of Diaspora indicates a problematic anti-Jewish trend. “For the first time since the Holocaust”, the ministry explains, “there is an establishment-led threat on freedom to practice the Jewish faith in Europe, by prohibiting public Jewish customs and marks by the establishment. The European Court of Justice

decided that any country is free to prohibit kosher slaughtering within its borders without violating European law, while continuing to allow hunting. The ruling is a dangerous precedent and it raises the concern of other limitations such as a prohibition against male circumcision". All this is occurring in countries that consider themselves enlightened and that uphold individual liberties.

The Ministry of Diaspora indeed notes a drop in the number of antisemitic posts on social networks but warns that the more extreme remarks are moving to other unsupervised platforms. The claim is that "although the social networks can do much more in order to prevent the spreading of hateful words, it appears that the moves taken by the major networks against malicious discourse have led the most radical users to migrate to less supervised networks".

### 1.2.2 The Rise in Antisemitism in the US

The Ministry of Diaspora's report shows a significant rise in antisemitism even in the US. "The causes of the rise", explains the report, "are the COVID crisis that hit the country hard, the political polarization in the presidency campaigns, spreading conspiracies, and the protests following the death of George Floyd".

A survey conducted by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) shows that nine of every 10 respondents answered that they are worried about antisemitism and 8 in 10 (82%) contend that it has increased in the last five years.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews were accused of spreading COVID because they do not heed the regulations and see themselves as not obligated by the law; and if they contract it – it is because they rejected Jesus' teachings and crucified him. In Iran and Turkey claims were also made whereby the Zionists together with the United States are the source of the pandemic and will profit from it when thousands of Muslims, and particularly Iranians, will die in the Middle East.

The US, previously considered safe for Jews, is no longer so. The problem is strongly evident in an article by Zvika Klein (June 18, 2021, pp. 24-25). He cites Rabbi Pesach Lerner, founder of the "Eretz Hakodesh" slate in the World Zionist Congress, who said: "Jews will no longer wear a yarmulke in Manhattan". The rabbi describes the unbelievable situation in the US, formerly the symbol of democracy and freedom. He claims that Jews, and whites in general, are keeping their heads down. They are avoiding the subway and there is considerable police presence in Jewish areas.

In the article mentioned, Klein brings updated data on the subject: A survey conducted by the League against Defamation shows that 75% of US Jews harbor an increasing concern of antisemitism, both in the US and elsewhere. Moreover, at the time of Operation "Guardian of the Walls" 60% reported having witnessed antisemitism following the violent incidents this past May. There is a rise in violent physical incidents in the US compared to previous years.

Jews have lived safely for many years in the land of endless opportunities. The Statue of Liberty that welcomes those arriving in the US embodies in its design and in its very creation openness towards foreigners and acceptance. However recently, and as stated mainly following COVID and Operation "Guardian of the Walls" in Gaza, which was forced on Israel, displays of hatred and violence have increased, beginning with the massacre at the "Etz Hayim" synagogue in Pittsburgh, through displays of hatred by the radical right wing, also during President Trump's term in office, and now hatred crimes inspired by the radical left wing, bearing Nazi symbols such as swastikas, mentions of Hitler, comparing Israel's leaders to him, and more.

Accusations aimed at the Jews come mainly from groups that preach white supremacy as well as ultra-conservative Christians and supporters of Islam. In contrast, in the Middle East the accusations are aimed at Israel, Zionism, and the Mossad, as those who devised, initiated, and spread the virus and will earn a fortune from medicines and vaccines that they are already preparing. In the western world the main element pushing the antisemitic discourse are civil groups characterized by a diverse ideology, where in some Middle East countries it is the regimes themselves that are promoting the antisemitic discourse.

The features of this antisemitism reflect a return to classic antisemitism that includes conspiracies side by side with medieval blood libels that have resurfaced in a renewed format in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the media and social networks. Monitoring of publications shows that Islamists are describing the State of Israel as the COVID-19 virus – with the statement that this is the most dangerous virus for humanity. The elements that arise from monitoring of the data are at times reminiscent of the well poisoning libel during the Black Plague in the Middle Ages. In one example, a caricature in France portrayed the Jewish former Minister of Health joyfully poisoning a well.

For various reasons, the Jewish majority in the US traditionally supports the Democratic Party, and therefore many criticize Israel's conduct. Regretfully, also these liberal Jews, who thought that they are safe in America and have no

need for Israel, are affected by the acts of hatred and bullying. Jews are afraid to speak Hebrew in public, to attend synagogues or Jewish centers, and to frequent kosher restaurants.

Unlike Jewish self-isolation, Palestinian supporters gather and demonstrate at all times and in everywhere, while demonstrations in favor of Israel are few and hesitant. Masses incited by hatred are demonstrating in the streets, drawing many with their hatred and violence without even understanding the underlying reasons.

Israel's former Minister of the Diaspora, Omer Yankelevich, related to the concerning findings in the report: "For thousands of years the Jewish people served as a scapegoat for all the world's worries. Regretfully, antisemitism has not skipped over the current pandemic. In the past this phenomenon led to the decimation of entire Jewish communities; at present it is being recycled and driven by the social networks. This is only one example of many representing the new face of antisemitism in present times, which will be detailed in the antisemitism report of the Ministry of Diaspora for 2020. If antisemitism is a global phenomenon then the battle against it must be global as well. I hope that in the coming year we will manage to work together to eradicate the virus of antisemitism from the world. Only a resolute and uncompromising struggle can curb this pandemic".

### 1.2.3 "The Jews Were Accused of Developing and Spreading COVID": Report on Antisemitism for 2020

Tel Aviv University, together with the European Jewish Congress, published an antisemitism report for 2020, showing a drop in physical violence against Jews but also the emergence of antisemitism on internet platforms (<https://www.maariv.co.il/news/israel/Article-832431>).

Zoom bombing is a term that reflects use of Zoom to break into virtual events held by Jewish synagogues, congregations, and students in order to prevent them from being held, taking this opportunity to portray swastikas, the presentations of the perpetrators, speeches by their representatives, and so on. A parallel phenomenon is occurring on the dark web, whereby radical groups, particularly right-wing, have begun to utilize this platform that is unsupervised and unrestricted, in contrast to the popular social networks.

This study too shows that while COVID was spreading, accusations were made that the Jews had developed the virus and were spreading it throughout the world. This type of accusations, called "Jude virus", was heard not only in radical groups that usually spread hatred against Jews but rather also among those not identified politically or ideologically.

In the United States a rising trend of violent incidents is evident in the past few years, up to 119 this year versus 99 in 2017, for example, and in Germany too there was a rise in the total number of cases, from 2,032 in 2019 to 2,275 in 2020, including 59 cases of physical violence. In both countries, the majority are incidents of vandalism.

Dr. Moshe Kantor, President of the European Jewish Congress, said that in a year of strict restrictions and lockdowns it is only natural to see a drop in the number of violent attacks against Jews. With the rise in antisemitism on the internet, however, the next wave of attacks against Jews and Jewish targets could be right around the corner. In times of social and financial crisis, Jews have always been a target and a scapegoat, and we saw this throughout the entire cycle of the COVID pandemic. Jews were accused of having caused the virus and also the vaccine, including comparisons of the restrictions and vaccines with the Nazi antisemitic policy, with the intention of minimizing the dimensions of the Holocaust and its significance and diminishing the murder of six million Jews. We hope that what we are seeing is not the quiet before the "perfect storm" of hatred for Jews in the next few years (<https://www.maariv.co.il/news/israel/Article-832431>).

"Jude virus" is a graver accusation than previous accusations of Jews throughout history. The libel spread, reaching us from dozens of countries, and was manifested in aggressive words and many malicious caricatures. It was heard not only in radical circles such as advocates of white supremacy, ultra-conservative Christians, and the regular accusers such as Turkey and the Palestinian Authority, and particularly Iran who made efforts to disseminate the accusation, rather also spread to people with no specific political or ideological inclinations.

Numbers and trends: As stated, the lockdown in the various countries reduced the possibility of encounters between Jews and those who wish them ill and the number of violent events dropped in practice during 2020 from 456 to 371, a number characteristic of 2016-2018. No one was murdered this year due to being Jewish and the number of physical attacks against Jews diminished from nearly 170 in 2019 to 107 in 2020 (although physical attacks could culminate in casualties). Harm to private property also diminished from 130 cases to 84 because people were mostly at home, but the level of vandalism perpetrated towards Jewish property and institutions remained as before and, in some cases, even grew (see table 1).

The number of graveyards desecrated and destruction to Holocaust and other monuments throughout the world rose from 77 (2019) to 96 (2020) because these are in unprotected spaces, and the number of synagogues harmed also rose from 53 (2019) to 63 (2020), as these remained closed and vulnerable.

Table 1. Desecration of synagogues, graveyards, and destruction of Holocaust monuments

	<b>Violent incidents</b>	<b>Physical assaults</b>	<b>Harm to private property</b>	<b>Desecration of synagogues, graveyards, and destruction of Holocaust monuments</b>
<b>2020</b>	371	107	84	159
<b>2019</b>	456	170	130	130
<b>2019/2020</b>	827	277	210	289

Source: <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/israel/Article-832431>

#### 1.2.4 Antisemitism on the Web

Since the public sphere was restricted during COVID-19 and people remained at home, activities on the social networks were strongly intensified, including antisemitic activity, and this was characterized by aggressiveness and verbal violence. These occurrences are by nature hard to quantify.

**Zoom bombing:** Use of Zoom became an efficient and common means of communication, that can be harmed by breaking into virtual events held by Jewish synagogues, congregations, and students in order to interrupt them, taking the opportunity to portray swastikas, presentations of the perpetrators, speeches by their representatives, and so on. In the US alone 200 incidents of Zoom bombing were recorded.

**Development of the dark web:** Radical groups, particularly right-wing groups such as advocates of white supremacy and neo-Nazis, left the open social networks and joined the underground network that developed considerably in the past year, i.e., the unsupervised and unrestricted dark web. There they are operating undisturbed in their own websites that are very hard to follow. Namely, there was a drop in the number of statements on the open networks but at the same time also enhancement of activities on the dark web.

#### 1.2.5 Objection to Vaccination and the Holocaust, in Israel and Abroad

Anti-vaxxers compared the restrictions and the lockdown intended to reduce the spread of the pandemic to the policies of the Nazi regime and accused the establishment and the governments in different countries of using force: The lockdown was compared to imprisonment in ghettos and camps, the vaccinations are the equivalent of medical experiments, a certificate that awards rights after being vaccinated is similar to Nazi selections, anti-vaxxers are persecuted like Jews – both are considered undesirables – A proper inscription for the gate to Auschwitz should be: Vaccinations liberate, and so on.

In Germany, where objections to vaccination are particularly strong, people demonstrated bearing a yellow star on their clothes with the words “Unvaccinated” instead of Jew, and called Chancellor Merkel a Nazi. The emergence of the vaccinations and the vaccination campaign in Israel, assisted by Israelis and Jews who head the companies that produce them, such as Tal Zaks, former Medical Officer at Moderna, and Albert Bourla, CEO of Pfizer, served to reinforce the accusatory approach – here are Israelis and Jews who are collaborating so that Israel will be the first to recover while the rest of the countries in the world have to beg and stand in line before Jews.

In May 2021, about one year after the World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem, Operation “Guardian of the Walls” began in Gaza, followed by another wave of antisemitism. The events occurred in Israel and affected Jews all over the world.

#### 1.3 Current-Day Antisemitism – Gaza 2021

A new survey of the Jewish community in America includes a chapter on antisemitism (Rosner, May 20, 2021). The survey was published at the beginning of an armed conflict between Israel and Gaza, putting the question of harassment of Jews on the agenda.



Table 2. A few data and insights on America, Israel, and antisemitism

%	
51%	I was subjected to at least one of the phenomena
5%	I was threatened or physically assaulted
8%	I was harassed online
15%	I was called a derogatory name
19%	I felt unwanted
37%	I saw graffiti or vandalism

### 1.3.1 The Fighting in Gaza Reawakened Antisemitic Demonstrations in the US, also on the Left

The Anti-Defamation League reported 222 incidents of antisemitism during the 11 days of the last round of fighting between Israel and Hamas, versus 127 incidents in the previous two weeks. According to the CEO of the organization, in the last wave of attacks “no one wore hats with Trump’s campaign slogans” (<https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/world/america/.premium-1.9856104>).

Among the incidents documented during the fighting in Gaza were a brick thrown at the window of a kosher pizzeria in Manhattan’s East Side, and Jewish customers assaulted in a Sushi restaurant in Los Angeles by men who voiced antisemitic threats. In addition, in Arizona, Illinois, and New York, synagogues were vandalized. In Salt Lake City, Utah, a man carved a swastika on the entrance door to a synagogue in the early morning hours of May 16.

“Nothing like this has ever happened in Salt Lake City”, said Rabbi Avremi Zippel, whose parents founded the Chabad branch in Utah nearly 30 years ago. “But it’s on the rise all over the country”. Following the vandalism to the synagogue, leaders of the local congregation increased security, which was significant previously as well. “It’s ridiculous, it’s crazy that we have to treat houses of prayer like this in the US in 2021”, added Zippel, who described the fortified entrances, conspicuous guards, and lighting and security systems. “But we’ll do it”.

According to Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, Antisemitic incidents “have occurred from coast to coast and are spreading like fire in a field of thorns. The mere daring of these assaults seems completely different than in the past”. The Anti-Defamation League has been monitoring antisemitic incidents in the US since 1979, and two of the three last annual reports published showed record numbers of incidents. Last year the organization documented over 1,200 cases of antisemitic harassment – a rise of 10% compared to 2019.

### 1.3.2 During the Operation in Gaza: A Wave of Antisemitism throughout Europe

Grave events occurred in Germany, including flag burning and calls in support of Hamas. Operation “Guardian of the Walls” led, as stated, to a concerning rise in antisemitic events in Europe, under cover of pro-Palestinian demonstrations against Israel. In the Neukölln borough in south Berlin, for instance, demonstrators burned Israeli flags on the Sabbath, uttered calls against Israel, and raised Hamas flags. The gathering, attended by some 6,500 people, was against the COVID regulations, and police dispersed the demonstrators. A small group threw bottles, stones, and firecrackers at the hundreds of police on site, who responded with pepper spray. Several demonstrators were injured and dozens were arrested. German politicians called for more aggressive moves after a row of demonstrations against Israel.

Other violent demonstrations were recorded in other places in Germany, where some of the participants called for the dissolution of Israel. Felix Klein, commissioner of the federal government office for the fight against antisemitism, called to grant the police and the prosecution more authority in order to locate and punish those who display antisemitism. He expressed support for forming a national strategy to fight antisemitism and for a European standard for identification and punishment.

President of the Bundestag Wolfgang Schäuble said that while it is legitimate to “criticize Israel severely” and to “protest vehemently” against its policy, “there is no justification for antisemitism, hatred, and violence”. He particularly denounced the demonstrators who questioned Israel’s right to exist.

He said that the Muslim refugees and immigrants in Germany must understand “that they immigrated to a country where the unique responsibility for Israel is part of our identity”. He said that the Jewish congregations and their buildings must be provided with the best possible defense. Recently, security has been increased around schools, synagogues, and hospitals.

In the UK as well, Prime Minister Johnson said that “there is no place for antisemitism in our society”, after a convoy that passed through a Jewish neighborhood in London called to “rape their daughters” (News agencies, May 18, 2021. <https://news.walla.co.il/item/3436194>)

“There is no place for Antisemitism in our society”, tweeted Johnson on Sunday. “Ahead of Shavuot, I stand with Britain’s Jews who should not have to endure the type of shameful racism we have seen today”. One of his advisors said that his words were also directed at a list of antisemitic incidents over the weekend. On Saturday thousands demonstrated in London, burning and trampling Israeli flags.

In conclusion, according to the ADL Antisemitism Report for 2020, in this year the number of antisemitic incidents was the third highest measured by the organization. For instance, the report by the Human Rights Watch organization accuses Israel of an Apartheid policy, and including Israel in the category of Apartheid is antisemitic (<https://www.inss.org.il/he/antisemitism-in-the-usa>).

#### *1.4 The Hatred Industry – Antisemitism and Racism: the Past Century (Masuah Site)*

At Masuah, the International Institute for Holocaust Studies, an exhibition is on display focusing on the one hundred years from the 1920s to the end of the 2010s. It examines the dangers inherent in using mass media for purposes of incitement and propaganda, which reached their climax in laying the foundations for carrying out the most terrible genocide in modern history – the annihilation of the Jews in the Holocaust.

The first part of the exhibition focuses on the period between the emergence of Nazism to the end of World War II (1945). In this part, propaganda posters and caricatures are displayed that were used by the Nazis to portray the figure of the Jew as enemy of the Reich. An interactive multimedia system enables analysis of the explicit and implicit racist and antisemitic messages in these posters and caricatures as a means for demonizing and de-humanizing the Jews.

The second part of the exhibition reviews the period from the end of the war to the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It ranges from hope that the international community learned the lessons of the Holocaust with the conclusion of World War II, as manifested in a series of international conventions signed: the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, the Genocide Convention, and the Geneva Convention, to increasing racism and antisemitism in the 2010s.

The main axis that follows all parts of the exhibition examines the evolution of the “global Jewish conspiracy” myth from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century until the tragedy of the twin towers and present-day terrorist attacks in Europe. The exhibition ends with an analysis of the process's characteristic of incitement in the current-day social media and its dangers.

##### *1.4.1 Educational Challenges: Who will Tell the Story? How will the Story be Told? And What will Remain of the Story?*

A.B. Yehoshua in his article “The Holocaust as junction”, relates to this issue of imparting insights from the Holocaust: “How... do you anticipate the developing impact of the Holocaust on the existence of the Jewish people in the future?” No one is exempt from reexamining his worldview after the Holocaust... The post-Holocaust world is not the same world as it was before the Holocaust. The horizons of humanity have been breached for us. It is necessary to reexamine several of our basic concepts. We Jews must do so all the more... We must see the Holocaust as a type of giant historical junction from which different routes depart in different directions, where taking each of these routes can justify itself: despair of the world versus belief and desire to correct it, further establishment of faith in God or the opposite – loss of faith, normalcy of Jewish existence or the opposite – overwhelming proof of the abnormality of this existence, where the Holocaust is proof of the special Jewish fate... to what degree our fate and our place in the world are essentially different than the fate and place of other nations... The different historical course of the Jewish people was only validated by the terrible attempt of the Holocaust, as are those who see in the Holocaust overwhelming proof of the fact that it is not possible to evade one’s Jewish identity. The experience of the Holocaust is a great junction that allows an abundance of historical conclusions and at this terrible junction each must reach his own ideological decision... and recognize the legitimacy of contradictory interpretations... in tolerance and respect. In face of this powerful event – we all bow. But we must take care not to form irresponsible associations based on the Holocaust concept, which might reduce the intensity of the Holocaust. We, the descendants

of the victims who are obliged to remember, must take particular care to remain loyal to the factual accuracy of historical events and their correct proportions. And ultimately – the experience of the Holocaust, although a distinctly Jewish experience, has eternal meaning for humanity as a whole. Even if many years will go by, man will once again study this period, because the events of this terrible war have expanded the concept of mankind, the horizon of human options. It taught us things we did not know about the nature of mankind, for good and for bad. Side by side with the terrible despair also hope can emerge. We who were there and who came out of there can and even must raise the banner of faith in mankind.

The educational challenge of eradicating antisemitism in the post-Holocaust era – Is the educational system well prepared?

Analysis of Holocaust curricula in Israeli schools shows that the occupation with the Holocaust is manifested in the history discipline – by knowledge of facts. The link between the Holocaust and Antisemitism is missing from the official curriculum.

A similar situation is also evident in the guidance programs on the website for guides to Poland. Analysis of teaching and guidance topics found that neither the formal system nor the informal system deal with this issue.

<https://edu.gov.il/noar/minhal/departments/content-and-programs/Pages/Poland/training-materials-written-by-instructors.aspx>

1.4.2 Guides to Poland as Mediators of Current-Day Remembrance: From the Particular to the Universal – How do Guides from Israel Relate – 75 Years later?

The journeys to Poland, to the regions of the Holocaust, have become an educational course of action. In Israel and in many other countries, some believe that the best way to teach the Holocaust is by means of an unmediated sensory experience, and more than anything – on Polish land. Many resources are invested in executing the project in practice and the topic receives considerable public attention due to the uniqueness of the historical event, its scope, method – and the lessons learned from it.

The 1970s and 1980s symbolized the development of the new discipline – Holocaust instruction – on both formal and informal levels. On the formal level, Holocaust contents entered history textbooks. On the informal level, institutes for Holocaust instruction emerged and began to offer a wide variety of curricula distinguished by their various ethical emphases. In addition, many schools developed unique curricula written by the school staff (for instance: “Testimony from there” by the Harel high school, Jerusalem). Of the array of programs offered in the formal and informal educational systems, the experiential curricula of the journey to Poland received major attention and became the focus of hopes and expectations expressed by the public, educators, and the educational system. Proof of this is the unprecedented public consensus surrounding the journey in Israel.

The memory of the Holocaust, which was excluded in the past from the social discourse, has become a pillar of Israeli collective consciousness. Where in the past preservation of Holocaust remembrance was perceived as preservation of the exilic way of life (Resnik, 2003), in contemporary Israel it has become the thread that connects the extremities – from destruction and ruin to bravery and revival, from death marches to marches of the living, from the valley of death to the valley of vision, from a foreigner in a strange country – to a free people in Zion. The understanding and recognition of the power and significance of Holocaust remembrance as a unifying and connecting factor led to the beginning of a different Israel, one that absorbs from the roots of its past and uses them to grow in new directions. Within this Israel, the journey voyage accepted in 1988 as an experimental program for Holocaust instruction has since become a permanent program, where the visit to Poland is its essence (see for instance the State Comptroller’s report 2010 – on the lack of sufficient preparation).

In the world too, as in Israel, this model was embraced and many countries began to send their younger generations to see the indescribable for themselves (for instance: France, Italy). The repressed memories were revealed, the cold war ended, Europe emerged from its ruins, the countries of the world were free to deal with history so that it would not repeat itself. The term “Holocaust” became a symbol and it began to be used frequently for different needs. Collective journeys to the regions of death and ruin were a highlight that some called a “pornography of evil” (Yablonka in: Kashti, 2010). At present, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more than 60 years since that war, these journeys have reached epic proportions in Israel and around the world (Fontana, 2011; Davidovitch, Hezkelovich & Soen, 2011). All memory is concentrated on those areas where the events occurred and in the last decade specifically on Poland and particularly Auschwitz which has become its emblem.

Many countries have decided to instill the memory of the Holocaust in the younger generation in an experiential manner. Data from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum indicate that more than a million and a half visitors, among them many school children, come to the site each year (Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum).

The Holocaust may be said to be an important part of human history, one that shook the foundations, everything we thought we know about human nature, and continues to do so. The scope, the intensity, the planning, the operation, the precision of the Nazi killing machine – all these are a focus of interest. The topic, which in the past was hidden, has in time become a focus of interest around the world. The intensity and complexity of the topic has planted hope among educators and policymakers that this will be the source of salvation – by exposure to these harsh contents we shall manage to touch our children’s souls, to teach by elimination how one should behave and what should be avoided.

More than 75 years after the conclusion of that war we are standing before several options with regard to how we wish to impart the memory of the Holocaust. The first option is to let the various educational systems take memory wherever they see fit; each with its own method, each with its values, world, and agenda. The second option, which in the opinion of the current authors is the most desirable and preferable, is to create a discourse between the educational systems in Israel and around the world. As Jews, it is important for us not to neglect the fact that the Holocaust was first and foremost directed at eliminating all Jews in the world. At the same time, both for the Jews and for Israelis there is an understanding and inclination towards universalism, in the understanding that these values are no less significant than the unique Jewish values – in fact, they go hand in hand, as Judaism instructs first of all that one should behave humanely before matters of faith. As of the time these lines are being written, educational systems in Israel and around the world indeed maintain formal and informal instruction of the Holocaust but the journey has become the essence. There is a row of joint professional development courses for Holocaust guides in Israel and elsewhere, but still ultimately each returns to his country and the routine is resumed, reminiscent of the biblical saying that there is “one language and many manners of speech”, meaning that there is a fundamental deficiency in communication between the various educational and Holocaust imparting systems. If we seek to enhance remembrance we must create a uniform teaching, one whose representations of the different events is balanced, one that can be taught both in Israel and in other countries.

Where does historical memory take us? We seem to be at a crossroads, which encompasses a challenge and obliges action. Guides to Poland have an important role.

Holocaust instruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a challenge. Few are the historical events that have had an impact with consequences for all humanity. The journeys to Poland are examined in this study in the context of growing antisemitism in the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The question is what is the message and what are the tools provided to students in order to deal with antisemitism which, far from not halting, is receiving a new representation in various events? In order to deal with this issue, we conducted an interview-based study that examines the human and educational profile of guides to Poland.

## **2. Method**

### **Research findings among guides of groups to Poland on guidance informed by the topic of Holocaust and antisemitism**

#### *2.1 Background Characteristics of Guides to Poland in the Study*

The study included 47 interviewees aged 33-77, with a mean age of 58.5. Two thirds were men and one third women. The percentage of academics was very high at 98%, and 79% of the guides had a Master’s or PhD degree. An absolute majority of the guides were Israeli born (91.3%).

#### *2.2 Affiliation with the Holocaust*

About 70% of the guides noted that someone in their family had been affected by the Holocaust, particularly parents (noted by 47% of the guides), grandparents (19% of the guides), and aunts or uncles (11%). Six percent of them noted that their entire family had been affected by the Holocaust. Only 30% of the guides noted that their family had not been affected by the Holocaust. The experiences noted most frequently as having afflicted the guides’ relatives were death (30%), escape (27%), incarceration in a concentration or death camp (24%), and being Holocaust survivors (21%).

#### *2.3 Professional Development on the Topic of the Holocaust*

All the guides had participated in professional development courses and training in Israel, with an emphasis on the course for guides of delegations to Poland (64%) and the annual professional development courses required of guides

(55%). Fifteen percent of the guides participated in these courses at the “Shem Olam” institute, which is an institute operated on behalf of Yad Vashem for religious guides. Half the guides participated in courses in Poland as well, including seminars on the Holocaust (30%), guidance courses (15%), and professional development (11%).

#### *2.4 Features of the Guidance*

The main target population of the guides are Israelis: 89% of the guides work with Israeli teens, 49% with groups of Israeli adults, and 13% with Israeli academic students. A very small part of the guides (6%) also work with foreign groups.

### **3. Analysis**

#### *Attitudes of the guides on topics related to the Holocaust*

In the interview the guides were asked about their attitudes to topics arising during their guidance on the Holocaust. They could give a ranking of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). There was a very high degree of agreement with the Jewish narrative on the Holocaust, including that the Jews were victims of the Nazi occupation of Europe (5), global lack of involvement during the Holocaust (4), and that the fighting in the ghettos and among the partisans was unique to the Jews (3).

With regard to the lessons of the Holocaust, the guides agreed to a less than medium degree with the claim that the establishment of Israel is a victory of civilization over evil (3). The guides were highly agreed that visits to Poland are an important educational tool with regard to instruction of the Holocaust (4).

### **4. Findings**

#### *Attitudes of the guides to the contents of guidance on the Holocaust*

In the guides’ opinion, the main challenge of Holocaust instruction is the ability to connect teens to the subject (44.7%). Challenges mentioned by a smaller number of guides are the need to shift to a more universal or ethical discussion of the Holocaust’s lessons instead of discussing the historical events (25.5%) as well as a drop in the significance of the Holocaust (13%). With regard to events from the last decade that affect Holocaust instruction, one fifth of the guides noted the “Polish law” (19%) and others noted events that in their opinion are not compatible with the moral lessons of the Holocaust, such as increasing antisemitism and xenophobia in Israel and across the world (21.3%), the war in Syria and the high number of consequent casualties and refugees (17%), and also the social and political state in Israel (10.6%).

With regard to changes in Holocaust instruction in the coming decades – many guides noted that the fundamental change will be coping with the death of the survivors and the inability to hear first-person testimonies of the events (15%), and consequently – the transition to instruction based on photographed documentary material (23.5%). About one fifth of the guides contend that Holocaust instruction will not change (21.5%) and a small part are concerned that the significance of the subject will diminish (8.5%).

The “positive” results of the study attest to the “negative” results. The study shows that the topic of antisemitism is **not** a significant part of the guidance. The research findings show that the challenge is still waiting to be confronted. Education is an essential tool in the battle against antisemitism, but the educational system, both formal and informal, is not prepared.

### **5. Conclusion**

This article deals with one of the gravest phenomena in the history: the Holocaust and the association with current-day antisemitism. Seventy-five years after the liberation of Auschwitz, a conference was held in Jerusalem to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2020, with speeches by presidents, prime ministers, and leaders of the free world. Analysis of contents from their words raises the need to speak out against antisemitic displays. On one hand, antisemitism is intensifying around the world, on the other world leaders are taking responsibility for the horrendous events, speaking out against it seeking to fight it. This is a significant difference between the actual circumstances and the official policy.

No more than two months after the conference we were exposed to antisemitic events in their 2020 form. The COVID-19 virus reared its head – together with a wave of antisemitic events, the pretext being that the Jews had brought the COVID pandemic. Not a year passed and once again – 2021 antisemitism, manifested in practice and in contents, in Israel and overseas, on websites and social networks, following Operation “Guardian of the Walls” in Gaza. In the case of conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians the hatred to Israel increases and is projected towards the Jews of the world as well.

Assuming that education is an important tool for eradicating antisemitism, particularly when the latter also appears in schools and academic institutions, the question addressed in this study is whether the educational system is prepared for the challenge of education for eradicating antisemitism in the post-Holocaust era.

Analysis of school curricula in Israel on the Holocaust shows that occupation with the Holocaust is manifested in the history discipline – by knowledge of facts. The topic of the Holocaust and the association with antisemitism is absent from the official curriculum. A similar state is also evident in guidance programs on the website for guides to Poland. Analysis of teaching and guidance shows that the formal and informal systems do not address this issue.

In light of the interviews conducted it was found that most of the guides to Poland are men, with an academic education, and Israeli born. Most come from families that experienced the Holocaust. All the guides participated in professional development and guidance on the Holocaust in Israel, with an emphasis on the course for guides of delegations to Poland. About half the guides also participated in professional development courses in Poland. The main target population of the guides is teens.

With regard to the attitudes of the guides to topics that arise during their guidance on the Holocaust, very high agreement was found concerning **the Jewish narrative** of the Holocaust. Albeit, the guides' agreement with narratives stressing the uniqueness of the Jewish people in the Holocaust was medium. **Namely the Jewish narrative of the Holocaust exists but is not perceived as unique.** This also seems to be the reason for the lack of attention to the problem of contemporary antisemitism.

With regard to the lessons of the Holocaust, the guides do not perceive the establishment of the State of Israel as a manifestation of the victory of civilization over evil. The guides agree to a large degree that the visits to Poland are an important educational tool for teaching about the Holocaust. In their opinion the main challenge of Holocaust instruction is the ability to connect the teens to the subject. Challenges mentioned by a smaller number of guides are the need to switch to a more universal or ethical discussion of the Holocaust's lessons instead of discussing the historical events. The guides also noted a drop in the significance of the Holocaust among the younger generation.

## 6. Research Contributions

With regard to events in the recent decade that affect Holocaust instruction, one fifth of the guides noted the “Polish law”, others noted events that in their opinion are not compatible with the moral lessons of the Holocaust, such as increasing antisemitism and xenophobia in Israel and elsewhere, the war in Syria, and the large consequent number of casualties and refugees, as well as the social and political situation in Israel.

The research findings raise the considerable difference between the events of the past and insights learned from them and the challenges of contemporary reality, when antisemitism is rearing its head. Moreover, there is a deep difference as we have stated, between that stated publicly by leaders of the free world and the everyday reality in their countries. Surprisingly, a museum for commemoration of the Holocaust was recently opened even in Dubai. This is the only museum of its kind in the Arab world. This is a museum that was established by a private entrepreneur but with the blessing of the government, as otherwise it could not have opened.

Students whose life is affected by antisemitism do not receive knowledge that is significant for their life circumstances and tools to deal with this reality.

Holocaust and antisemitism – the challenge still awaits us.

## References

- Auron, Y. (2013). The pain of knowing: Issues in Holocaust and genocide instruction. Tel Aviv: The Open University. [in Hebrew]
- Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum. (2011). *The attendance record*. Retrieved May 20<sup>th</sup> from: [http://en.auschwitz.org.pl/m/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=728&Itemid=8](http://en.auschwitz.org.pl/m/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=728&Itemid=8)
- Baron, S. W. (1995). The Jewish people before the Holocaust and subsequently. *Mahanaim*, 9, About the Holocaust (B). [in Hebrew]
- Davidovitch N., & Soen, D. (2015). The trip experience – Poland and the Polish people as perceived by Israeli youth in light of their trips to the death camps. In N. Davidovitch & D. Soen (Eds.), *The valley of the shadow of death: The Holocaust experience from a multidisciplinary perspective* (pp. 153-174). Tel Aviv: Resling. (in Hebrew).
- Davidovitch, N., Soen, D., & Chaskelovic, A. (2011). The challenges of Holocaust instruction and remembrance: Particular and universal aspects in formal and informal interdisciplinary curricula in Israel and abroad. Images - The International Journal of European Film, Performing Arts and Audiovisual Communication. Special issue:

- (over) using the Holocaust. *Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań. part 1, 15(16)*, 49-66. ISSN 1731-450x. European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH). <https://doi.org/10.14746/i.2011.15.16.03>
- Don-Yehiya, E., & Liebman, C. S. (1984). The dilemma of reconciling traditional culture and political needs: Civil religion in Israel. *Megamot*, 28(4), 461-485. [in Hebrew]
- Fontana, L. (2011). Rethinking school trips to Auschwitz. A case study of Italian memorial trains: Deterioration of Holocaust pedagogy? In N. Davidovitch (Ed.), *The Holocaust ethos in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Dilemmas and challenges*. Ariel University of Samaria. [in Hebrew]
- Geertz, C. (1990). *Interpretation of cultures* (translated by Yoash Meisler). Tel Aviv: Keter. [in Hebrew]
- Geertz, C. (2005). *Works and lives; the anthropologist as author* (translated by Ohad Zehavi). Tel Aviv: Resling. [in Hebrew]
- Gretz, N. (1995). *Captive in its dream*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved, Ofakim. [in Hebrew]
- Grossman, H. (2005). The March of the Living. *Keshet Ayin*, 147, 12-14. [in Hebrew]
- Kashti, O. (2010). Aside from a 'pornography of evil', learning the technical details of the Holocaust has no educational value. *Ha'aretz*, March 22. [in Hebrew]
- Klein, Z. (2021). *Makor Rishon* (Bayoman, June 18, pp. 24-25). [in Hebrew]
- Liebman, C. S., & Don-Yehiya, E. (1983). *Civil religion in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520313019>
- Ofrat, G. (2011). Identity, memory, culture. Gideon Ofrat's storehouse. [in Hebrew]
- Resnik, J. (2003). Sites of memory of the Holocaust: Shaping national memory of the education system in Israel. *Nations and Nationalism*, 9, 297-317. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8219.00087>
- Soen, D., & Davidovitch, N. (2012). Youth trips to Poland – A case study of the Israeli youth movement model. In N. Davidovitch & D. Soen (Eds.), *The Holocaust ethos in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Dilemmas and challenges* (pp. 266-315). Krakow, Poland: Austeria. ISBN 978-83-61978-43-5.
- Stauber, R. (2000). *The lesson for the generation of Holocaust and heroism in public thinking in the 1950s*. Jerusalem: Yad Itzhak Ben Zvi. [in Hebrew]
- Stricker, S. (2010). A record number of visitors was set in 2009 at Auschwitz-Birkenau. *Ynet*, January 4. [in Hebrew]
- Yablonka, H. (2001). The State of Israel v. Adolf Eichmann, 2001, Tel Aviv, pp. 180-182, 245. [in Hebrew]
- Yablonka, H. (1998). Holocaust survivors in Israel – Initial summaries. *Bishvil Hazikaron*, 41, 24-31. [in Hebrew]
- Zerubavel, Y. (2002). The 'mythological Sabra' and Jewish past: Trauma, memory, and contested identities. *Israel Studies*, 7, 115-144. <https://doi.org/10.1353/is.2002.0018>

## Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).