



## Yad Vashem affirms deaths

by Miriam Weiner

Last year, more than one million people visited Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, including many foreign dignitaries. One million making certain that six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust are not forgotten.

As the foremost institution in the world for Holocaust research and commemoration, Yad Vashem serves as the beacon of awareness, education and remembrance of the devastation of European Jewish communities and the six million victims.

Most visitors to Yad Vashem who request a search of the files of "Pages of Testimony" are looking for confirmation of the death of a Holocaust victim. Frequently, these files become a testimony to the living as well.

According to the 1953 Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law, Yad Vashem is to "commemorate the six million members of the Jewish people who died a martyr's death at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators...to gather into the homeland material regarding all those members of the Jewish people who laid down their lives...to confer upon the members of the Jewish people who perished in the days of the disaster and the resistance the commemorative citizenship of the State of Israel, as a token of their having been gathered to their people."

In order to fulfill its task, Yad Vashem undertook to record the names of all the Jews who perished at the hands of the Nazis during the Holocaust. The registration was done by relatives or friends of the victims who filled out "Pages of Testimony," which contained all the pertinent biographical information on the individual and the circumstance of his or her death. These Pages of Testimony, which number over 3,000,000, are filed at the Hall of Names.

The library and archives serve diverse interests. The investiga-

tion and prosecution of Nazi war criminals relies substantially on the material available at Yad Vashem. The increasing number of publications on the Holocaust cite numerous sources from its files.

Among those utilizing its vast services are scholars, researchers, authors, and film producers, as well as students from all levels. Survivors and relatives of families lost in the Holocaust also visit the library and archives.

The archives contain more than 50 million documents concerning the Holocaust. On a daily basis, survivors and others continue to supply additional documentary items.

As the survivor and immigrant generation dwindles, more and more of their descendants feel the need and responsibility to discover and preserve their family history. The material at Yad Vashem provides a wealth of information for genealogists who are reconstructing the history of their family and the ancestral towns where they once lived.

"We regret that we have no information on your family members" is the usual response to my written inquiries over the years. However, not long ago, a search request to Yad Vashem yielded a different response and resulted in the discovery of a previously unknown branch of my family, most of whom had perished in the Holocaust.

The tracing of my family name of "Odnoposov" led me to the Hall of Names where it was confirmed that Pages of Testimony existed for at least two "Odnoposovs"—Henry and Ester. Ultimately, a year later, I was to sit with Ester's surviving son, David, in Tel Aviv, and record his memories of this new family branch.

When I received the Page of Testimony for "Henry Odnoposov," I was preoccupied with the biographical information and details of death at Treblinka. His place of birth, in Priluki, was the same ancestral town as mine and it was clear at once that he was part of our family. It took a while to register with me that the form was completed by a surviving brother, identified in 1956 as "David Ud." Then began the arduous task of tracing David

Ud from an address that was almost thirty years old. It took some time, efforts of several cooperative people and agencies and a little "mazel," too.

In a matter of months, I found David and his wife, Franka, living with their married daughter in Tel Aviv. Shortly thereafter, I was in Tel Aviv meeting my new cousin, David, and his family.

My first question was "why did you change your name from Odnopozov to Ud?" David and Franka told me they wanted a Hebrew name and "Ud" meant "the firebrand that is left from the fire." I understood immediately when it was explained that David was the sole member of his family to survive. When I unrolled the 20-foot computer printout of the Odnopozov family tree, David was overwhelmed with joy to learn he had such a large family spread throughout the world.

A lengthy exchange of letters, photos and memories have followed the first meeting with hopes of a worldwide family reunion one day in Jerusalem.

The Pages of Testimony project is still in progress. Yad Vashem provides blank "Pages of Testimony" to all interested individuals and organizations. They have initiated appeals to Jewish communities all over the world to participate in this endeavor. The American Society for Yad Vashem, 48 W. 37th Street, New York, N.Y. 10018, will provide the blank "Pages of Testimony" upon request.

Whether you are looking for information about your family members who perished or who survived, Yad Vashem is a valuable source of information. To initiate a search, write to Hall of Names, Yad Vashem, P.O. Box 3477, Jerusalem 91034 Israel. Although there is no charge for the search, a tax-deductible contribution is most welcome.

*A Beginner's Guide (55 pages) on how to research your family history, which includes charts, lists of archives and libraries, maps, bibliography, family group sheets and more, can be ordered from: Miriam Weiner, 136 Sandpiper Key, Secaucus, N.J. 07094.*

