

PILLAR OF FIRE – FROM AUSCHWITZ TO CASA-BLANCA

NITZA DAVIDOVITCH

Department of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences Ariel University
Kiryat Hamada 3, Ariel University. Israel 40700.

E-mail address: d.nitza@ariel.ac.il

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7273-903X>

RUTH DOROT

School of Architecture, Ariel University
Kiryat Hamada 3, Ariel University. Israel 40700.

E-mail address: ruthd@ariel.ac.il

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1884-1743>

ABSTRACT

Aim. This study examines the characteristics of the individuals who go on the journey to Poland, which is a key element of the Holocaust education curriculum in Israel, their personal connection to the Holocaust, as well as the socio-political developments in Israel that attempt to bridge the gap between the various poles in society – between East and West.

Concept. Holocaust education includes the formal part, which is the historical narrative, and the informal part, which is the journey to Poland. This study follows the development of Holocaust education and commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust – from the narrative of the Holocaust of the Jews of Europe to the narrative of the Holocaust among the communities of North African descent.

Results and conclusion. The findings of the study indicate a link between family support and ties to the Holocaust, and the journey to Poland, which appears to be in line with findings of Nitza Davidovitch and Dan Soen (2011), who found a correlation between the students participating in the journey and their personal connections to the Holocaust, in contrast to students with no family connection with the Holocaust. For all its importance, the journey to Poland has been found to perpetuate social polarisation.

Practical applications. The current study highlights the challenge of Holocaust education in order to build a bridge of shared historical destiny through this seminal event of the twentieth century.

Originality. This work sparks the question of how to make the journey to Poland a unifying factor in collective national memory.

Key words: Holocaust, North Africa, monument, Poland, education, remembrance



INTRODUCTION

The debate over instilling the memory of the Holocaust as part of the Jewish identity and consciousness has been preoccupying leaders of Israel's education systems, elected officials, and Israeli citizens for quite some time. This is one of the more controversial issues, rooted in the problematic nature of the younger generation's disengagement from its Jewish heritage. The issue of Holocaust education and the commitment to Holocaust remembrance is always on the agenda of the school education system, and recently the issue has also resurfaced in a report published by the National Academy of Sciences in Israel, headed by Prof. Israel Bartal, on the state of Holocaust studies in academia in Israel (2020). This report supplements the report of the Biton Committee (2016) for the Empowerment of the Legacy of Sephardic and Eastern Jewry in the Educational System, which also addressed the issue of the "Eastern Pillar of Fire."

Thus, based on our conviction that the education system makes a real contribution to shaping the character of its graduates, who have a Jewish identity, know the history of their people and are aware of the Jewish communities that were annihilated and that gathered from all corners of the world to establish a country for themselves as a nation with a shared destiny, we focus on instilling the historical memory of the Holocaust of the Jewish people, with emphasis on the Jews of North Africa.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the Hebrew education system became the infrastructure of the Israeli education system, which was tasked with the absorption of a new population – the immigrant population, consisting of multiple subgroups: Jews from Europe and Jews from Muslim countries, representing a broad range of cultures and traditions. The nascent state set itself a task: to absorb, educate, and assimilate the new populations in Israel through the education system. The immigrants included Holocaust survivors and Jews from North Africa. Both of these groups played an active role in the construction and the culture of the new country, as the Hebrew saying goes: We came to Israel to build and to be built. But what about Holocaust education?

Hana Yaoz addressed the need for Holocaust education:

The Holocaust is the central trauma of our generation, and Holocaust education is very significant for deepening students' attitude toward the Jewish people and its suffering, as well as for creating empathy with Holocaust survivors. Holocaust education raises conceptual questions and invites complex emotional experiences. We have before us an educational issue of national-historical significance, which must be reflected in the curricula and in the training of teachers of the State of Israel. In the first decades of the existence of the State of Israel, classroom teaching in literature and history lessons was very limited, there was little reference [to the Holocaust] in textbooks, and the topic was addressed mainly through Holocaust Day remembrance ceremonies (2011, p. 313).

It seems that most teachers were trapped in an alienated and problematic mindset vis-à-vis the fate of European Jewry in World War II, influenced by the mindset of the Jewish community that lived in Palestine before the Holo-

caust, and what is more, the fact that Holocaust survivors, who came to Israel as refugees, tended to distance themselves from their traumatic past in order to integrate quickly and effectively into Israeli society and culture. A shift in the attitude of Israeli society and culture to the Holocaust occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in the wake of the Eichmann trial, the trauma of the Yom Kippur War, and the influence of the second-generation Holocaust survivors on Israeli culture. The change was reflected in the establishment of a teaching unit in Jewish history for the upper grades of high schools, and in the 1990s, the literature curriculum for religious post-primary schools was expanded to include a Holocaust study unit that could be elected as a unit in the matriculation exams. This Holocaust literature curriculum remains the basis for the study unit on the subject that is used today as part of the matriculation curriculum in religious post-primary schools and was even incorporated, with minor changes, into the curriculum of Israel's state high schools.

In the 1960s, a major change in Israeli society's attitude toward the Holocaust occurred. There is a more empathetic attitude towards Holocaust survivors, most of whom are senior citizens; the second-generation has considerable influence on the survivors, along with increased interest on the part of the grandchildren, members of the third generation, mainly evoked by the student journeys to concentration camps in Poland that are conducted with the encouragement of the Ministry of Education (Lev, 2000). However, it should be noted that except for a few changes in literature and history curricula, no new curricula in the history and literature on the subject of the Holocaust were introduced in the past decade, and the time has come to form a team of researchers and teachers who will prepare new curricula, from a new perspective, that will suit Israel's contemporary reality – for new immigrants and native-born Israelis, for young people from the centre of the country and the periphery – for everyone.

Therefore, this study traces the development of Holocaust education – from the narrative of the Holocaust of the Jews of Europe to the narrative of the Holocaust among communities of North African descent, who are conspicuously absent from both discourse and remembrance. Holocaust education includes the formal part, which is the historical story, and the informal part, which is the journey to Poland. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the characteristics of those who go on the journey, their personal connection to the Holocaust, as well as the socio-political processes in Israel that attempt to bridge the gap between the various poles in society – between East and West.

UNBUILT MONUMENT AND THE UNTOLD STORY

Before it is too late, we must come to the realization that the Holocaust is not the obsession of the survivors, and the communion with the six million victims and the lesson of the period is not only the concern of those who personally experienced the horrors, but rather part of the long-term collective memory of the Jewish people, and the Holocaust belongs in the historical consciousness of every Jewish genera-

tion. This recognition is one of the tenets of contemporary Jewish identity, since without it, it is doubtful whether it is possible to achieve genuine identification with a positivist, living, and productive form of Judaism. Now more than ever, the future of the Jewish people depends on the Jews' attitude toward themselves and their past, their glorious heritage and the terrible tragedy, along with the soul-searching that this historical consciousness demands [...] (Kovner 1988, p. 11).

One monument in memory of the victims of the Nazis in World War II was almost built. In 2018, a student named Oliver embarked on a personal and independent project to erect a monument in memory of the Jewish LGBT victims, near the Moroccan city of Marrakesh. The project was made possible thanks to a human rights organisation called Pixel Helper, which operates through crowdfunding. It was planned to be a large and impressive monument. The project was initiated after Oliver discovered his last name on the lists at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. To his surprise, he found that the only monument in Africa for the victims of the Holocaust is in South Africa. Therefore, he felt the need to establish one in Morocco in North Africa as well, one that would commemorate the forgotten Holocaust of the Jews, a group that had been ignored for many years and was never commemorated. And yet, the idea of the monument failed. The Moroccan government decided to demolish it, during its construction.

Zionism and the initiator's affiliation with the gay community were too much to accept in a country where being part of the LGBT community is a crime. Of course, the official reason was completely different: the authorities claimed that the monument was built without the appropriate permits. Therefore, it was demolished before it was completed.

Monuments have been erected in Israel and around the world to "remember and not to forget...what Amalek did to you" (Dorot, 2015). Commemoration is important for various reasons and especially in the case mentioned above: the forgotten Holocaust of the Jews of North Africa.

Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, more than seven decades ago, it was either not known or unacceptable to mention that extermination and labour, concentration and forced labour camps for Jews, apart from having been erected in Europe, were also established in North Africa (Abitbul, 1986). For many years, the survivors of these camps – Libyan Jews, Tunisians, Algerians, and Moroccans – the parents and grandparents of the second- and third-generation Israelis, were forced to conceal their Holocaust stories.

This fact also echoes the plight of Holocaust survivors from Europe, who were also forced to keep their suffering to themselves. Only years later, when the native-born Israelis accepted them as part of the State of Israel, was their story recognised and considered worthy of commemoration, while the survivors of the North African forced labour camps continued to conceal the accounts of their experiences (Jablonka, 2008). Only after the Eichmann trial in 1961 did the attitude towards European Jews who were exterminated in the Holocaust change. Up to that time, they had been perceived as having gone like sheep to the slaughter.

Director and producer Dr Rami Kimhi published an article on the subject in *Haaretz* on May 5, 2019. In his article, he lists three reasons for the exclusion of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews from the context of the Holocaust. Despite his sympathetic approach to the topic, he objects to using the term “Holocaust” for the events that occurred in North Africa. Although he believes that these events should be remembered and mentioned, they should not be called a Holocaust.

The Germans in North Africa

In World War II, the Nazis charged ahead mercilessly and were relentless in the annihilation of the Jews of Europe. Hitler and his fascist allies also systematically attempted to eliminate North African Jewry, despite the fact that they were not included in the Wannsee Conference (Abitbul, 1986). In June 1940, the Germans occupied France. Military rule was instituted in the north and centre of the country, and the rest of France was left to Marshal Philippe Petain, who established the Vichy government and also controlled the French territories in North Africa. In Morocco, where Jews had civil rights, no anti-Jewish laws were officially enacted, but such laws were enacted against the Jews of Algeria, where the Crémieux Decree was revoked (Abitbul, 1986), depriving Jews with French citizenship of their rights and citizenship.

The first anti-Jewish law was published by the Vichy regime in France in October 1940, without any demand on the part of the Germans. This law, which corresponds to the Nuremberg Laws (1935), defines “who the Jews are” (Genio, 1999). Following a series of laws, Jews were banned from engaging in the liberal professions and subsequently their freedom of movement was restricted. Heavy fines were also imposed on the Jewish communities in North Africa by the Vichy regime and the Italian fascist government. In 1940–1943, Italian forces committed many atrocities in Libya (Bernhard, 2012).

The cultural activity was restricted and thousands of Jews were sent to camps, mainly to the Jadu concentration camp located in Libya. The Jews of Cyrenaica were also sent to the Jadu concentration camp. This was the first stage in the German plan to transfer the Jews to Italy, and from there to the extermination camps in Europe, to which all the Jews of Tripoli were also intended to be transferred (the Babylonian Jewish Heritage Center website; www.livluv.org.il). In January 1942, Italian actions against the Jews of Tunisia began. About 2,000 Jews from the towns of Tripoli and Benghazi were sent by sea to Italy (Simon, 1986) on a perilous journey to a concentration camp in Innsbruck, Austria or Bergen-Belsen in northern Germany.

The Vichy administration was anti-Semitic and passed laws against the Jews of its own volition. The Germans began to confiscate Jewish assets and many were recruited for fortification works. They were treated disgracefully and conscripted for forced labour. Moreover, the Jews were forced to establish a local Judenrat, which was tasked with the selection of thousands of Jews to be concentrated in labour camps (“Information About the Holocaust, Yad

Vashem website, https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/he/holocaust/resource_center/index.asp).

In July 1942, under orders from Germany, French police arrested more than 13,000 Jews, including about 4,000 children. There is no evidence that the Nazi regime sought to arrest children, but the Vichy regime decided to take the initiative and seize the opportunity. The French Jewish detainees were housed in very difficult conditions ("Information About the Holocaust, Yad Vashem website, https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/he/holocaust/resource_center/index.asp) and from there they were deported to Drancy and their final one-way journey – to Auschwitz.

Jewish heroism in North Africa

On November 8, 1942, the Allies invaded North Africa as part of Operation Torch. The Germans and Italians experienced many defeats in battle, and the Americans and the British hoped that the German and French forces in North Africa could be repelled.

On the day of the Allied invasion of the Algerian coast, 380 resistance fighters staged a coup on the streets of Algeria against supporters of the Vichy regime. The vast majority of the underground fighters were Jews, as was the leader of the coup José (Yosef) Aboulker, an Algerian Jew (Kesner & Ronen, 2009). Overnight, the underground fighters took control of telephone exchanges, radio stations, the governor's house, and the headquarters of the French forces (Abitbul, 1986). Twenty-four hours after the coup by the Jewish underground in the city, American forces arrived and the city governor surrendered. Two days after the Allied landing in Morocco, the Vichy regime's puppet army surrendered and the landing was crowned a success (Kesner & Ronen, 2009).

In view of the paucity of available information and limited awareness of the story of the Holocaust of the Jews of North Africa, the heroic story of the Algerian underground and José Aboulker should be brought to the fore. Yehuda Kesner and Yehudit Ronen criticised the exclusion of such information in *Pe'amim*, a history journal published in Israel:

The editorial board of *Pe'amim* contributes to the elimination of the Jewish underground in Algeria from Israeli memory. The editorial board of *Pe'amim* has failed, in our opinion, by disregarding the issue, and their disregard reeks strongly of silencing. A journal dedicated to the study of Oriental Jewish communities should not conceal this underground movement hidden from its readers but should give them an opportunity to become acquainted with it (2019, p. 158).

It must be said that there are also conflicting opinions about the Jewish underground's heroic motives. Prof. Haim Saadoun and Michael Abitbul were aware of allegations (Abitbul, 1986) that the underground was basically driven by French interests and did not operate out of Jewish motives at all. They claimed that the underground acted solely for French and nationalist reasons to restore French citizenship to Algeria's Jewish residents, which had been revoked in that period.

Many people feel that the story of the heroic coup of the Jewish underground in Algeria and its assistance to the Allied forces to win the battle has been erased from Zionist memory and has been subsumed under our collective memory of the Holocaust and heroism (Kesner & Ronen, 2008). Furthermore, we should neither forget nor downplay the heroic story of the ghetto Jews, which is perceived as negligible when compared with the Algerian underground, which cooperated with the Allied forces and the government coup in Algeria. Despite the importance of the underground, to the best of our knowledge, there are no sites in Israel named after its members, while there are streets and a kibbutz named after Mordechai Anielewicz, as well as monuments of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in Tel Aviv, Haifa, Kiryat Motzkin, and elsewhere in Israel. Few people know the heroic story of the Jews of North Africa, in contrast to the tragic heroic story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The Holocaust of the Jews of North Africa may not have been properly told, it may not have been made public, yet what is certain is that this Holocaust did not benefit from the degree of publicity as benefited the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

North African Jewry's exclusion from the context of the Holocaust

After World War II, the State of Israel was inundated with immigrants from all over the diaspora, and the history of the absorption of the various communities into the young Zionist state left many scars (Jablonka, 2008). Holocaust survivors turned their trauma and memory of the Holocaust into their personal experiences, which were not considered to be of any public interest (Jablonka, 2008). The Holocaust survivors were reluctant to talk about their experiences and a bond of silence was forged among them (Jablonka, 2008; Tilovich-Levy, 2017).

There was, however, another reason for the survivors' silence. The Ashkenazi establishment, which dominated Israel in its early years, sought to bring everyone into the Israeli melting pot, in order to create a new image for the newly founded national Zionist project – the so-called warrior sabra (Jablonka, 2008; Kisel, 2013; Davidovitch & Soen, 2015). As a result, the survivors of the Holocaust in Europe, the Diaspora Jews, were forced to remain silent and were even ashamed of their weakness when facing the Nazis. At the same time, as a result of this atmosphere, Mizrahi Jews, who were generally not among the founders of Zionism or considered a legitimate part of the country's hegemony in those years (Shimoni, 2010), were forgotten or marginalised, which also explains the disregard for the Holocaust of the Jews of North Africa. Although most of the systematic atrocities and their consequences took place in Europe, the events in North Africa should still be marked and commemorated. This is how David Ben-Gurion (1965), the Prime Minister of that time, described it in one of his speeches:

Those from Morocco had no education. Their customs are the customs of the Arabs. They love their wives but beat them [...] Maybe in the third generation a member of the Jewish Mizrahi community will be a little different, but I do not see that yet (p. 25).

and

We need human beings who were born to be laborers. More attention should be paid to the local Mizrahi element, to the Yemenis and the Sephardic Jews, whose standard of living and demands are lower than those of European laborers and will be successful in competing with the Arabs (p. 531).

Hanna Jablonka (2008) and other researchers consider the Eichmann trial in Israel to be a formative event that was, according to Alon Gan, followed by “a process of walls cracking and tumbling down” (Gan, 2015). Gandescribed this as a series of socio-political processes that affected Israeli society, mainly in the 1960s and 1970s (Zandberg, 2006), when Israeli society was becoming more critical and pluralistic, possibly due to the stressful period on the eve of the Six-Day War (Feldman, 2001), or the rise of the Black Panthers movement in the 1970s, which protested the plight of Mizrahi Jews and their discrimination by the Ashkenazi establishment in a series of demonstrations, some of which included acts of violence and vandalism. The protest of the Black Panthers placed the plight of the Mizrahi community on the Israeli agenda and caused a furor in Israeli society. One of the results of this revolution was the so-called alliance of the underprivileged, between Menachem Begin and the Mizrahi Jews, which led to the political turnaround of 1977 (Don-Yehia, 1993), the transition from the rule of the socialist left to the rule of the right.

More recently, in her book *Away from the Railroad – Mizrahi Jews and the Holocaust* (2008), Holocaust historian and researcher Jablonka mentions the 1980s and the outbreak of the First Lebanon War as a point in time at which Mizrahi Jews attempted to widen the crack of the so-called Ashkenazi Holocaust, which she claimed served as a kind of “victim filter” that highlighted their suffering and filtered out all other sufferings. According to Gan (2015), the “Ashkenazi” Holocaust ranked highest on the “Richter Victim Scale” (Gan, 2015). Faced with this situation, Mizrahi Jews were forced to downplay their pain and disgrace (Jablonka, 2008).

The memory of the Holocaust in Israel focuses on the Holocaust of the Jews of Europe and negates the suffering of the Jews of North Africa, some of whom were also sent to labour camps and concentration camps and some of whom were even murdered. Israeli discourse on the Holocaust has made no room for the Jews of North Africa (Algeria, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco). Although their fate was apparently better than that of the European Jews, this is not a sufficient reason to ignore the many Jews who were annihilated in the camps, who worked or lost relatives there (Jablonka, 2008).

Liat Steyer-Livni (2014) notes that, in addition to streaming Mizrahi Jews to Israel’s cultural and geographical periphery, making the Holocaust a central component of the Israeli identity led to the exclusion of Mizrahi Jews from the Israeli identity. In recent years, the Mizrahi community has expressed a need to be a part of the collective memory, through which they can connect to others, participate in the struggle to gain a proper place in

society and especially in the shared memory of the united nation (Gan, 2015).

Changes have, however, occurred. Jablonka argues that second-generation Mizrahi Jews' desire to have a share in "being Israeli" also applies to the collective memory of the Holocaust. Third-generation Mizrahi Jews, unlike their predecessors, consider themselves to be legitimate partners in shaping the memory of the Holocaust, thus they are challenging the existing patterns of memory. The many changes that Israeli society has experienced have generated changes in the conceptualisation of Holocaust memory and a shift from the personal suffering of survivors to the suffering of a nation and a shared collective memory (Jablonka, 2008; Steyer-Livni, 2014; Gan, 2015).

How can one forget or allow others to forget a tragedy on the scale of the Holocaust, when the oppressor himself left an indelible mark in the form of a tattooed number on the survivors' flesh, along with pain and nightmares etched in their hearts? There remain convincing "living monuments" such as the extermination camps, crematoria, barbed wire fences and railway tracks engraved in their souls. Therefore, one must fight the natural tendency aimed at forgetting or escaping, for the sake of building a present and future that are ostensibly healthy and devoid of memories.

From time immemorial, we have been ordered, as individuals and as a nation, to remember. To remember and not to forget because, without the past, there is no future; our future as individuals and as a nation stems from the past and is connected to it.

The power of the nation is in its memory – it is man's uniqueness. And if we want to live, and if we want and aspire to bequeath life to our sons, if we believe we have been commanded to pave a way to the future, then first we must remember and record (Dinur, 1956, p. 18).

The author Aharon Appelfeld, a Holocaust survivor who has spent his entire life turning public and private events into art, claims:

If you want to convey a topic as weighty as the Holocaust, you must use intimate things. Intimacy is created in the personal story, but greater, more significant intimacy is made possible through art. In art, the artist takes the personal experience and transforms it. Only things that have a very personal basis can be passed down from one generation to the next. Ideas, abstractions, concepts, etc. are not things that can be passed down... Typically our starting point is that testimony is considered authentic, and art is considered an invention. This is not true. What you see in your imagination is your personality as a whole, more than just a memory. Memory is only one element. When you invent a situation, you mobilize your entire personality. Once you are in the world of imagination, you discover more, see more, and feel more (Appelfeld, 1997, p. 15).

The most common work of art used for commemoration is the monument: "It is common to consider as a monument any statue, pillar, pile of stones, or architectural site that contains a set of meaningful symbols commemorating a historical event" (Brutin, 2005, p. 1).

HOLOCAUST HISTORIAN

James Young claims that when he wanted to examine the different ways in which countries or communities portrayed the destruction of European Jewry during World War II, he discovered that the definition of “commemorating the Holocaust” depends very much on its shape and location. “For the national memory of what I might call the Shoah varies from land to land, political regime to regime... I will allow every site to suggest its own definition, each to be grasped in its local context” (1993, p. 8).

Inspired by Young’s position, in this article, I include also in the definition of “monument” any educational action that commemorates the memory of the Holocaust (Dorot, 2015). A case in point is a well-known educational activity that takes place in Israel, i.e. the journey to Poland, whose official role is to commemorate the Holocaust and educate future generations.

THE MONUMENT – THE JOURNEY TO POLAND

Journeys to the great valley of death located in Poland by individuals, groups, youth, and adults are one of the main means of instilling and perpetuating awareness of the memory of the Holocaust in Israel. The journey to Poland is laden with national, historical, and emotional implications. The journey of the President of the State of Israel, Yitzhak Navon, was the herald that enabled the planning and implementation of an experimental educational programme for teenagers focusing on a journey to Poland. Today, 32 years later, the Ministry of Education develops and operates a unique programme for youth in high school and youth movements prior to their enlistment in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The Ministry is the main organiser of the journeys and also determines the sites and the aims of the journey (Feldman, 2001; Davidovitch & Soen, 2011). A journey to Poland lasting 8-10 days, which is the climax of the educational Holocaust commemoration process, begins with preparations before the journey and continues during and after it, in collaboration with commemorative centres such as Yad Vashem, the Ghetto Fighters Museum, Massuah, and other institutions.

According to the Ministry of Education, one of the goals of the journey to Poland is:

(...) to feel and try to make the connection of young Israelis on the eve of their enlistment into the IDF, deepen their identification with the fate of the Jewish people, and improve and strengthen their sense and recognition of a personal commitment to Jewish continuity (Davidovitch & Soen, 2015).

The youth journey to Poland is considered to be one of the main Holocaust education activities in the Israeli education system. In recent years, going on the journey is considered an acceptable and very popular mode of commemorating the memory of the Holocaust among students (Steinowitz-Levy, 2017). It is an experiential learning journey (Davidovitch & Soen, 2008) and participa-

tion therein is not mandatory; students make a conscious decision to travel and see the horrors of the Nazis with their own eyes. The journey includes visits to the extermination camps, Jewish cemeteries, one or two synagogues and other sites. The Ministry of Education currently requires delegations to Poland to visit the Auschwitz extermination camp.

Extensive research on the journeys to Poland (e.g. Davidovitch & Soen, 2011) indicates that affluent students go on the journey more often than the rest (59% compared to 27% - 38% students from less affluent homes). Nevertheless, despite the costs involved in the journey, there is a steady increase in the number of students who choose to participate.

This journey can provide a deeper understanding of the cruelty and extent of the tragedy of the Jewish people, through synesthesia - i.e. a combined use of the senses of sight, smell, and touch, which illustrate the horrors and evoke emotions in conjunction with the brain. The journey's constitutive combination is an educational-experiential method for studying and commemorating the subject.

The literature includes a large number of studies on the journey. These studies examine the values and rules related to the knowledge, feelings, and attitudes of the youth. For example, a study conducted by Shlomo Rumi and Michal Lev (2003) examined the long-term effects of the journey on the participants' cognitive and emotional attitudes over a period of 1 - 5 years after the journey. In their study, participants were divided into groups according to the time that had elapsed since their journey: 1 - 3 years and 3 - 5 years, with a control group of participants who did not go on the journey at all. The study findings indicated that the effects of the journey persisted over time, and differences were found between the young people who went on the journey and those who did not.

Another study that was conducted on various types of delegations also examined the journey as part of the Witnesses in Uniform program (Haskel, Davidovitch, & Soen, 2013). Findings indicate that, after their return, participants reported the journey to have expanded their knowledge of the events of the Holocaust and the importance of commemoration.

Dina Porat (2006) conducted a similar study on the topic that reflects the different voices in the memory discourse of Israeli youth who are not necessarily descendants of survivors and come from different social sectors. Participants of this study were students in a secular state high school in a development town that is populated mainly by members of the Mizrahi community and immigrants from the FSU. These students considered spiritual resistance to be a lesser form of resistance, compared to other participant groups.

This important educational journey might have potentially healed, to some degree, the open wound of the community of North African Jews and their second- and third-generation descendants. In addition, this educational-experiential-ethical journey might have served as a monument to the atrocities suffered by members of Mizrahi communities from North Africa. According to Jackie Feldman (2001), such a journey should have been able to connect the different narratives of the two "camps": Ashkenazi Jews and Mizrahi Jews.

This study seeks to examine the characteristics of those who go on the journey, their personal connection to the Holocaust, as well as the socio-political processes in Israel that attempt to bridge the gap between the various poles in society – between East and West.

NEW RECOGNITION OF NORTH AFRICAN JEWS AS HOLOCAUST

Despite what has been said and despite the discrimination that still prevails in the commemoration of North African Jewry, a number of actions have been taken in recent years to change this situation. In 2008, the first conference of its kind was held at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, which centred primarily on the history of North African Jews in World War II. In recent years, archival materials have shed new light on what was known by researchers up to now, and many new studies are being carried out. As a result, a more complete picture of the events that befell the Jews of North Africa during World War II is starting to emerge (Yad Vashem, 2008). The conference was held to mark the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Libya from the Italian-German occupation and the 60th anniversary of Israel's independence. It was organised in collaboration with the Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi Institute; the conference organisers included Dr Haim Saadoun, an expert on the Jewry of Arab and Islam countries.

In the national memory, the Holocaust was perceived as an exclusive traumatic experience for European Jewry (Shimoni, 2010). Only in 2011, there was a counter-reaction to the accidental or deliberate oblivion or silencing, in the form of the David Amar Center for the Study of Jewish Heritage in North Africa, which is located in Jerusalem. The Center does not focus solely on the memory of the Holocaust, as do other Holocaust institutes in Israel. Instead, its activity is dedicated to researching the history of North African Jews, including the collection of testimonies of families and Holocaust survivors, conferences, classes, photos, and cultural documentation mainly of the communities of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. The Center maintains permanent and rotating exhibitions and a cantorial institute.

Another tier in the recognition of the injustice took place when the Law of Official Memorial Day to Mark the Departure and Expulsion of Jews from Arab Countries and Islam was enacted in the Knesset on July 3, 2014, to mark the day of the deportation of Jews from Arab countries and Iran. The Law states that every year, on November 30, there will be a day to mark the departure and deportation of Jews from Arab countries and Iran, on this day. In addition:

- (1) The Minister for Senior Citizens will issue an order for the opening of a national ceremony;
- (2) The Minister of Education will encourage the holding of educational activities in connection with that day;
- (3) The Minister of Foreign Affairs will order activities, including through Israeli missions abroad, to increase international awareness regard-

ing Jewish refugees from Arab countries and Iran and their rights to compensation;

- (4) The Knesset will hold a special debate on the day marking the departure and deportation of Jews from Arab countries and Iran.

On the face of it, the Law is intended to be a token law and its purpose is mainly to try to create equality between immigrants and refugees from Arab countries and Iran and those from other diasporas in an effort to atone for historical and ethnic gaps.

In 2018, several years after the Law was passed, at a ceremony held in the Knesset Plenum to mark the Day of Deportation, Member of Knesset Ksenia Svetlova asked:

I am just asking, why did we have to wait so many years for the State of Israel to start talking out loud about the right of Jewish refugees?! [...] it is doubtful whether our children today know about Rabbi Shabazi? What child has heard of him?

In the early 1950s, a severe depression prevailed in Israel and the Austerity Regime promulgated regulations for the allocation of food and basic necessities to residents, out of concern for ensuring the security of the newly established State of Israel. This situation could have been changed with the arrival of compensation payments to Holocaust survivors from the German government.

Despite widespread opposition to reparations, the reparations agreement (the Luxembourg Agreement) was signed in 1952, motivated by West Germany's political and publicity interests to atone for the country's role in the Holocaust (the German word *wiedergutmachung* means correction of injustice) for the historical injustice and present itself as the other Germany (Feldman, 2001). Naturally, huge reparation sums that flowed from Germany were used by the State of Israel for the purchase of goods and services, as well as military, agricultural and industrial equipment. Personal compensation (reparations) was also given to Holocaust survivors who met certain criteria and were able to prove their eligibility to file claims for compensation and restitution of property.

Those who were not included in this agreement at all were the Jews of North Africa, who had been imprisoned in labour camps under Italian and French-Vichy rule during the war. They were excluded on the grounds that they did not have a "linkage to German culture" (<https://treaties.un.org/>).

After the unification of Germany in the late 1980s, North African Jews began to file claims, but they encountered many administrative and personal difficulties (Jablonka, 2008). The result of this injustice exacerbated the class differences in Israel that were created by socioeconomic differences that gradually increased over the years.

Years later, civilian private entities and communities of Jews of North African descent, mainly the children and grandchildren of the refugees, attempted to negotiate with the State of Israel and the German government regarding compensation and to gain recognition of this diaspora as "full-fledged" Holocaust survivors.

Following are a number of legislative changes in chronological order:

- In 2010, an administrative decision was made for the comprehensive recognition of Jews from Libya who are entitled to benefits under the law, even if they did not directly suffer from acts of violence.
- In 2011, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (also known as the Claims Conference; www.claimscon.org), a non-profit organization established in 1951 secures material compensation for Holocaust survivors around the world, began disbursing a one-time grant to Jews from Morocco. According to the new agreement with the German government, a one-time grant was paid to Jews from Morocco who were subject to restricted freedom of movement during World War II, including freedom of movement in parks and public spaces, which were typical prohibitions against Jews under the Nazi regime and its allies. According to estimates by the Claims Conference, nearly 7,000 Jews are expected to file claims.
- On December 3, 2015, Minister of Finance Moshe Kahlon determined that Moroccan and Algerian Jews who suffered from restrictions in various areas of life under the Vichy regime will be entitled to benefits and discounts and a full exemption on the purchase of prescription drugs included in the health services basket. This step is another tier of the official recognition that these Jews are “full-fledged” survivors.
- Jews who lived in Algeria between July 1940 and November 1942 and suffered from persecution at the hands of the Nazis may be entitled to one-time compensation of €2,556, through the Claims Conference.

MIZRAHI ART AND LITERATURE

Growing recognition is also evident in the world of culture. From the mid-1990s onwards, an increasing number of texts dealing with the Holocaust from a Mizrahi perspective have been written. Batya Shimoni (2010) points to a development that has taken place in recent years in the writing of works about the Holocaust and remembrance, and describes Mizrahi writers who write about the Holocaust who have a common denominator: all the Mizrahi writers covered by Shimoni in her article were born and raised in neighbourhoods where the “worldview of the first Jewish people, the Ashkenazi Jews” was firmly rooted (2010, p. 192). In her book, Jablonka calls the process in which members of Mizrahi Jews who are these second-generation Holocaust survivors internalise the memory of the Holocaust as the “second floor of the memory” (Jablonka, 2008).

Following the studies by Davidovitch and Soen (2011), below we present two of the many works that deal with Mizrahi history and the Holocaust of the Jews of North Africa, which made their way into the Israeli mainstream memory since 2008.

Night of Fools

Kimhi's film *Night of Fools*, which won the Ministry of Education and Culture's Zionist Award in 2015, relates the story of the Jewish underground in Algiers, the capital of Algeria. For many viewers, this is the first time they are exposed to the heroic and completely lost story of the Jewish underground and its efforts to overthrow the Nazi regime and occupy the city when American forces in Operation Torch entered the city. According to director Kimhi, a media lecturer at Ariel University:

Writing and directing this film about the Jews of Algeria, and their great contribution to the Allied forces in World War II - is a calling for me. To tell the lost story of the underground Jews, who sadly realised over the years that the Israeli narrative of the Holocaust simply skipped them and their story (*Ynet*, January 27, 2015).

Benghazi-Bergen-Belsen

The Brenner Prize for Literature for 2014 was awarded to Yossi Sucary's book, *Benghazi-Bergen-Belsen*. This book is the first novel in the world to tell the story of a Libyan Jewish family and its tumultuous travels until they meet their death, like many, at the hands of the Nazis in Bergen-Belsen. Sucary delves deeply into the wounds of his family and the wounds of Israeli society in the process of exclusion of North African Jews. Sucary commemorates the abysmal gaps in historic narratives prevalent in Israeli society today and brings to light the silenced voices of the people of this region.

The Biton Committee

The highlight of the official and overdue recognition of the Jews of North Africa and Asia or Mizrahi Judaism was, in fact, the Biton Committee for the Empowerment of the Legacy of Sephardic and Eastern Jewry in the Educational System. The committee, which was headed by Erez Biton, a poet and winner of the Israel Prize for Literature, set itself the goal of restoring the lost dignity of those Jews of Sephardic-Mizrahi descent. Committee members included Dr Shimon Ohayon, director of the Dahan Center for the Heritage of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry.

On the instructions of then-Minister of Education Naftali Bennett, the committee was established to examine the study materials on Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry used in the education system and what is missing from them. An in-depth examination of the current curricula revealed a profound deficiency in all areas of study: history, literature, Jewish philosophy, civics, in both the state education system and the public religious education system. This was also found to be the case in academic research.

As a result, the Pillar of Fire TV show produced three new episodes on the contribution of Mizrahi Jewry to Zionism and the establishment of the State. These episodes tell the stories of the Mizrahi Jews in the transit camps, the struggle of the Black Panthers, the establishment of the political parties Tami and Shas, and finally the establishment of the Hakeshet Had-

emocratit Hamizrahit (Mizrahi Democratic Front). One of the focal points of the series is a description of the struggle for recognition and the constant efforts, since the pre-Independence period, to destroy the barriers placed before the Mizrahi Jews who were excluded from the story of the Zionist enterprise.

THE JOURNEY TO POLAND – BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

Differences between Mizrahi and Western cultures and sectorial issues have created and are still creating tension in society. In Israeli society, the memory of the Holocaust has been shaped over the years as a collective European-Ashkenazi memory and, as stated, the memory of the Mizrahi Holocaust has been marginalised. To many, the phrase “Mizrahi Holocaust” appears to be a marginal and negligible term (Jablonka, 2008).

The issue of ethnic groups in Judaism is not new. On the contrary, it was deeply rooted in Israeli society even before the immigrants began to arrive in Israel. The Jews of North Africa were excluded and the issue was silenced for many years. However, the seminal events in Israel’s recent history effectively brought the Holocaust of the Jews of North Africa to centre stage.

Shimoni (2010) believes that, in the 1960s, the education system consciously used the memory of the Holocaust and the melting pot principle to create unity and to bridge the differences between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews. She claims that North African Jews completely identified with the suffering of the Holocaust in Europe.

Much has been written about the status of the Holocaust as a key element in the hegemonic Israeli identity. Since 1988, the journey to Poland has become one of the most important phenomena in the shaping of Holocaust remembrance in the late twentieth century and it is the pinnacle of Holocaust studies for adolescents (Davidovitch & Soen, 2015).

Feldman (2001) calls the journey a “pilgrimage to Poland” and a “rite of passage” for adolescents before being drafted into the IDF. These journeys and students’ experiencing the horrors of Auschwitz, Treblinka and the killing forests have become an obligatory stage in the socialisation of adolescents in preparation for their enlistment in the IDF (Feldman, 2008; Davidovitch & Soen, 2011). Some of the students who go on the journey to Poland are the third-generation and sometimes even fourth-generation Holocaust survivors: some retell the personal stories of their grandparents at the ceremonies (Feldman, 2001), while others hear such stories for the first time.

Extensive public and academic debates have developed around the journeys, which are an integral part of the debate on Holocaust teaching and its place in the education system. The fact that the Holocaust altered the face of history in general and Jewish history in particular is of global significance (Tilovich-Levy, 2017). The Nazis killed not only Jews but also individuals with disabilities, gypsies, homosexuals and dissenters.

The present study follows the findings by Davidovitch and Soen (2012), who examined the contribution of the journey to Poland in several ways, mainly in terms of compatibility with the activities that take place in the formal education system and activities in informal settings. To extend the current body of knowledge, we examine several fundamental issues that offer insights on the depth of commemoration through the journey to Poland – the monument. These issues are articulated in the following research questions that guided our research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do journey participants have closer family ties to the Holocaust? This study hypothesises that third – and even fourth – generation students who have a personal connection to the Holocaust will express a stronger desire to visit the death camps.
2. Is there a closer connection between the subjects who chose to go on the journey and their familial or financial support?
3. Would students object to replacing the journey to Poland with alternative trips to relevant sites in Israel or abroad? Such objections would support the claim that there is no substitute for the journey to Poland.
4. Do participating and non-participating students differ in the levels of fear or apprehension of a second Holocaust for the Jewish people or even for any other people?
5. How does the journey affect the members of the Mizrahi community?

THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Two questionnaires were used in this study:

1. Journey to Poland Questionnaire

To examine the research questions, a questionnaire was adapted for this study from a questionnaire developed by Davidovitch and Soen (2008). The self-report questionnaire brings several of these weighty topics to the surface. Participants indicate their agreement with items on a scale from 1 (very little) to 5 (very much).

2. Demographic Questionnaire

A standard demographic questionnaire gives a broader picture of the participants, whether they went to Poland and in what framework, and was is their personal connection to the Holocaust.

RESEARCH PROCESS

Participants (N=153) were students at Ariel University, who had and had not participated in the journey through their school or other educational set-

tings. The questionnaire was distributed online via WhatsApp; online questionnaires on Google Forms were also used. Data were processed using SPSS software. Participants were not required to answer the study questionnaire and were given the opportunity to stop completing the questionnaire at any time. In addition, students' anonymity was maintained throughout the study.

STUDY FINDINGS

Participants

Of a total of 153 participants, 42 were male and 111 were female. Participants' mean age was 25.8, SD = 1.7. Most of the participants (144) were born in Israel.

In terms of religious definition, most participants defined themselves as secular (N=117), 20 defined themselves as traditional, 14 as religious, and 1 as "other." Most participants (112, or 73.2%) went on a journey to Poland in a school setting, or in other settings (IDF: N=5, youth movements: N=4, other: N=8).

Table 1.
Participants' Religiosity

Level of religiosity	N	%
Secular	117	77%
Traditional	20	13.2%
Religious	14	9.2%
Ultra-Orthodox	0	0%
Other	1	0.7%

Source: own study.

Of all participants, 81 reported having completed their full military service, 18 completed partial military service, 11 served in the career army, 4 served as officers and 31 participants stated that they did not serve in the IDF.

Table 2.
Personal Connection to the Holocaust

Gender	Family member who perished in the Holocaust	Family member who survived the Holocaust
Male	N=38 25%	N=88 58%
Female	N=115 75%	N = 65 42%

Source: own study.

A total of 38 male participants stated that one of their family members had perished in the Holocaust, compared with 88 participants who stated that none

of their family members had perished in the Holocaust. A total of 115 female participants stated that one of their family members had survived the Holocaust, compared to 65 who reported that one of their family members had perished in the Holocaust.

To examine the question of whether there is a statistically significant connection between going to Poland and having a family connection with the Holocaust, we performed two chi-squared tests. This question was divided into two parts: participants were asked to rate their agreement with the following statement: "Only those who had some personal connection to the Holocaust chose to go on the journey." It seems that a minority of participants disagreed with the statement (26.8%, $N=40$), while a majority ($N=109$, 73.2%) agreed to some extent.

An examination of the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant connection between participating in the journey to Poland and having a family member who perished in the Holocaust indicates that there is a statistically significant connection between the variables ($p < .05$, $1 = DF$, $4.15 = \chi^2$). Kramer's correlation coefficient indicates a statistically significant yet weak association ($RC = 0.17$) between participating in the journey and having a family member who perished in the Holocaust.

To examine the question of whether there is a statistically significant connection between participating in the journey and having a family member who survived the Holocaust, we performed another chi-squared test. The findings indicate that there is no statistically significant connection between the variables ($p > .05$, $1 = DF$, $1.59 = \chi^2$). The hypothesis that there would be a stronger association between those who went on the journey and had a family connection to the Holocaust was partially supported.

Family Support

In order to examine the question of whether there is a statistically significant connection between going to Poland and having family support, we performed a chi-squared test. The findings indicate that there is no statistically significant connection between the variables ($p > .05$, $1 = DF$, $1.59 = \chi^2$). Kramer's correlation coefficient between participating in the journey to Poland and having a family member who perished in the Holocaust indicates a statistically significant yet weak association ($RC = 0.47$). This hypothesis was supported.

The Alternative Journey

To examine the hypothesis that a difference would be found between those who went on the journey to Poland and those who support alternative means of commemoration, we conducted a t-test for independent samples. However, it turns out that students who participated in the journey showed lower support for alternatives to the journey to Poland ($M = 1.06$, $S = .028$) compared to those who did not participate ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 1.01$). One explanation for this finding is that the sights in Poland are difficult, but visits to other places would not

be able to generate the emotional shock of the journey to Poland. Secondly, alternative journeys may be supported as a less expensive alternative.

The Fear of a Second Holocaust

To examine this question, a t-test for independent variables was performed. The findings indicate that the difference in the level of fear of a second Holocaust between the group of those who participated in the journey and those who did not is statistically significant ($t(37.59)=3.76, p<.01$). Apparently, the mean fear of students who participated in the journey to Poland ($M=3.17, S=1.6$) is higher than that of the students who did not participate in the journey to Poland ($M=2.04, S=1.3$).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Studies on Holocaust awareness in Israeli society indicate that the memory of the Holocaust is a seminal ethos in the cultural representations of Israeli society (Jablonka, 2008; Davidovitch & Soen, 2011; Tilovich-Levy, 2017). The Holocaust is etched as a traumatic memory in the history of the Jewish people in general and as a personal memory for survivors in particular. Among members of the second generation, it is etched out of empathy with the pain of their parents (Jablonka, 2008).

As part of this study, we examined the research hypothesis that significant differences would be found between those who participated in the journey to Poland and had a personal connection to the Holocaust, and participants who had chosen not to participate in the journey. Participants with a family member who perished in the Holocaust feel a strong need to see, feel, and attempt to imagine the atrocities of the Germans on Polish soil. These findings are similar to those of Davidovitch and Soen (2011), who found an association between a personal connection to the Holocaust and participation in the journey, as opposed to students with no family connection to the Holocaust.

The present study also examined whether and, if yes, to what extent the journey to Poland is an indication of social polarisation and an invitation to the so-called "ethnic demon" that is always waiting to rear its ugly head, or whether the journey is a unifying element in our national-collective memory.

The present study emphasised the changes that have taken place in Israeli society and among survivors of the North African Holocaust, which occurred since the study by Davidovitch and Soen (2008) on the journey to the death camps in Poland, and the changes in their recognition as Holocaust survivors.

The ethnic tension between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews is one of the deepest rifts in Israeli society (Gan, 2015). Unlike many other studies examining general values related to knowledge, feelings and attitudes towards the journey to Poland, in the present study, we investigated how the journey to Poland affects students' connection to the memory of the Holocaust, with one side appropriating the suffering of the Holocaust and the other side wanting a

share of ownership, after decades of marginalisation and exclusion. Although the journeys to Poland stress the shared experiences of the Holocaust and collective memory, differences in the treatment of materials related to Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Holocaust experiences remain.

The journeys to Poland focus on the destruction and devastation that the Holocaust wrought on European Jewry, which was almost completely annihilated, yet they do not sufficiently emphasise the rich Jewish life in pre-war Poland, just as they certainly do not sufficiently mention the entire communities destroyed in Greece, Serbia, Croatia, Italy and Macedonia, where the atrocities of the Nazis were experienced to a lesser extent compared to the rest of Europe. The countries of North Africa – Tunisia, Libya, Algeria and Morocco – are almost completely excluded from the discourse.

Furthermore, until now, teachers training programmes at universities and colleges have not emphasised the subject and its teaching methods (Yaoz, 2011).

An examination of the state of Holocaust education in post-primary schools in the State of Israel, as well as teachers training and in-service training at universities and colleges, points to an urgent need for a significant, dynamic, and practical change in line with new approaches to the conceptualisation of the Holocaust and contemporary mindsets, perceptions, and attitudes of adolescents.

Many questions that arose as a result of the historical preoccupation with the Holocaust raised awareness of the multidimensionality of the Holocaust. This is reflected in interdisciplinary approaches that combine historical research with literature, drama, film and the plastic arts. Preoccupation with the Holocaust is benefiting from new perspectives and new tools for representation. Therefore, contemporary curricula for Holocaust teaching require an interdisciplinary approach that not only includes teaching the subject in history and literature, but also in theatre, film, and the plastic arts. Now more than ever, Israeli adolescents communicate via technological devices, and interdisciplinary concept approaches have the potential to bring them closer to the heritage of the Holocaust survivors.

To this end, a team of researchers and teachers with experience in Holocaust education in the various disciplines must be formed, and an interdisciplinary curriculum for Holocaust education at public religious and general post-primary schools in Israel must be created. These efforts must include both expanding existing curricula and adding new curricula in disciplines in which the Holocaust has not been studied so far, such as theatre and film. At the same time, there is a need for in-service training for teachers in order to promote the establishment of teams of Holocaust education teachers who use an interdisciplinary approach. Holocaust education requires an innovative and moral approach that will preserve awareness of the legacy of the Holocaust for future generations.

We believe that the teaching about the Holocaust, more than 70 years after it took place, constitutes a cognitive, emotional, and moral challenge for Israeli

society and all nations alike. In our modern society, issues may arise which we, as a society, have refrained from grappling with up to now. In this article, we have attempted to address some of these issues, which must not be left unresolved under any circumstances. Disregard does not lead to healing: it leaves the problems intact. It is possible that in our modern, multicultural society, the discourse generated by the Holocaust actually creates fertile ground for action by the younger generation, who will continue to preserve the memory of the Holocaust (Appelfeld, 1997).

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