

News from Remember Us



Remember Us: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project offers an invitation to children who are preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah to connect with the memories of children who were lost in the Holocaust before they could be called to the Torah.

The Project works with all denominations. Congregations across the country and around the world are participating.

Overseas Congregations

Word is spreading to other countries about the **Remember Us Project**. The program has been adopted by Orthodox and Conservative synagogues in Australia, thanks to an inquiry forwarded to us by the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. And through our web site we were contacted by a Conservative synagogue in Israel, which is now providing names to its Bar/Bat mitzvah students.

Remember Us in the Media

Reform Judaism magazine has the largest circulation of any Jewish publication in America. It is distributed to each member household in the Reform movement. The **Remember Us Project** was featured in the "Achievers and Exemplars" section of their Spring issue. The text is available on our web site, in the About the Program section. Later this Spring a radio interview about the Project will air on B'nai B'rith Radio, which is carried on the Sirius network.

A Chance Encounter

This story moves us as another example of the impulse to remember the lost children. Last April, a young man was traveling in Israel with his parents prior to his Bar Mitzvah. His family is involved with the Jewish National Fund, and so they visited the Jerusalem office of JNF. There they saw the records of trees planted to mark the milestones in the lives of European children in pre-war Europe. The young man realized that for most of those children, the only evidence of their lives was in that record. He dedicated his Bar Mitzvah to those children, including all gifts. The family is erecting a memorial wall in Jerusalem's American Independence Park. In the same spirit that **Remember Us** helps create living memorials, this project creates a memorial while supporting the work of JNF. For more information about plaques for the wall, contact the Jewish National Fund.

One Child's Response

A religious school director sent us this letter:

"I would like to tell you about one student's participation in the Mitzvah Project, **Remember Us**.

At the beginning of her Bat Mitzvah studies she was given the name of a girl, Haja Bloch, who perished in the Holocaust before reaching the age of her Bat Mitzvah. Throughout her studies she kept this child in her mind. Her Bat Mitzvah was b'shem in the name of Haja as well as her own. When she chanted Torah today it was also in the name of Haja.

In addition she read the book *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, in order to learn more about the world that Haja lived and died in, and she spoke of her in her Dvar Torah.

Our tradition allows the Bat Mitzvah to take on the adult responsibility of saying Kaddish, the prayer for a family member or someone you want to remember who has died. Our Bat Mitzvah took on the responsibility of saying Kaddish for Haja today and will do so every year on the anniversary of this date.

In addition, she has pledged a donation to the congregation's Religious School Scholarship Fund in memory of Haja, thus fulfilling the Mitzvah of Tzedakah as well.

Thank you for providing this inspiring spiritual and educational opportunity for our students at this transformational moment in their lives."

Yad Vashem Launches Campaign to Collect Names

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial agency in Israel, has launched what they call "an eleventh-hour campaign" to collect names of men, women, and children lost in the Shoah. The campaign reaches out to communities around the world, to connect with survivors who have not yet recorded what they know about people who were lost. The last generation of survivors is starting to dwindle and will be gone in not many more years, so this is a crucial effort. Educators can find abundant resources for organizing this program in their schools and communities at the Names Collection web site, www1.yad-vashem.org/names/whyCollect.htm.

Our connection with Yad Vashem has been very valuable and mutually supportive. **Remember Us** receives the names of lost children from their database, formatted for our specific use. In return, we have had the opportunity to act as consultants during the creation of their Names collection project.

An Enduring Jewish Ritual

Since starting three years ago, **Remember Us: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project** has supported thousands of Jewish children as they encounter the Holocaust. It provides an invitation to a positive, life-affirming act of memory in the face of this dark chapter of human history. More than 85 congregations have accepted the invitation for their children to participate. Many friends, colleagues, and institutions have encouraged and supported this creation.

Best use of resources

The **Remember Us Project** is able to reach more congregations and students through a combination of generous donors and absolutely minimum costs. In this past year, the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund has renewed our funding for the third time. They provide the core support on which the Project has been made possible. We have also received very welcome grants from the Charles and Mildred Schnurmacher Foundation and the Sidney Stern Memorial Trust. A local congregation of the Center for Spiritual Living provides us with a monthly stipend from their tithes. Friends of the Project continue to send additional donations. And our Certificate program brings in a steady flow of contributions. Rent and other expenses are in-kind donations from our two-person part-time staff.

The endowment

Now we turn to the task of establishing this practice as an enduring Jewish ritual. All it will take to ensure continuity is the resource base to continue reaching out to new communities and supporting the growing list of participating communities. To fund this continuity, we are setting out to establish an endowment.

If you, your community, or someone you know would like to help ensure the continuity of this simple and deep work, please contact us through the **Remember Us** web site about support for the endowment. www.remember-us.org



Remember Us

The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project

708 Gravenstein Hwy North #39
Sebastopol, CA 95472-2808
(707) 570-2883

remember@sonic.net · www.remember-us.org

Gesher Calmenson, Director
Barbara Tobin, Coordinator

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"So long as we live they too shall live, for they are part of us as we remember them"