

# BETWEEN HOLOCAUST AND NATIONAL TRAGEDY – THE CASE OF ISRAEL

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## ABSTRACT

**Thesis.** The thesis of the article is to examine the discourse in Israel, which compares the events of the Holocaust in Europe in the twentieth century and the events of October 7, in which the terrorist organization Hamas attacked Israel, murdering, raping and kidnapping hundreds of people.

**Concept.** Regardless of the testimonies, terminology, and discourse in the public, leadership, and academic sphere linking the events of the Holocaust to those of the Swords of Iron war, there is room to inquire whether Holocaust-related concepts and displays can be used in reference to the events of October 7, 2023 in Israel, and to what degree. Do the comparison or similarity between the events result in disparagement or in reducing the enormity of the Holocaust, and to what degree, or do they on the contrary serve to illustrate these events? The study examines journalistic articles, both printed and digital, in several categories: ideology, symbols, and satire. All these were examined in three spheres: in the public-journalistic discourse, in the leadership-political discourse, and in the academic discourse.

**Results.** The study shows that the discourse comparing the events of October 7 and the Holocaust exists both within the Israeli discourse and within the global discourse.

**Conclusion.** In light of the comparison between the grave events, the research findings may have pedagogic and public implications for the narrative of the October 2023 events in Israel.

**Keywords:** Israel, October 7, Holocaust, Hamas, Nazism, narrative, memory

## PREFACE

On October 7, 2023, in the midst of the Jewish Sabbath and the festival of *Simchat Torah*, the Hamas terrorist organization based in the Gaza Strip attacked Israel on land, from the air, and from the sea along 60 kms, while also launching thousands of missiles towards the center of the country. Thousands of terrorists charged 20 towns, IDF camps, and a nature party attended by thousands, perpetrating acts of massacre, rape, torture, as well as mutilation of corpses. Approximately 1,200 Israeli citizens and foreign workers were murdered in the attack, about 2,000 were injured, and some 250 men, women, elderly people, and children were abducted, including babies of less than a year old. In the towns of the Gaza envelope enormous damage was inflicted on property, besides many acts of looting and destruction. This was the most heinous attack in the history of Israel and the third most horrendous in the entire world since the 1970s, second only to the September 9, 2001, attack by al-Qaeda terrorists in the US and the Camp Speicher massacre by ISIS terrorists in Iraq. President Isaac Herzog said, “Not since the Holocaust have so many Jews been killed in one day” (Berski, 2023). The discourse surrounding October 7 and the Swords of Iron war that developed following the massacre became part of the global discourse – including pro-Palestinian demonstrations; many antisemitic displays, which multiplied by five (Golan, 2023); verbal and physical attacks; vandalized headstones; and graffiti on synagogue walls (Baratz-Rix, 2023). This also calls for the annihilation of the state of Israel and the Jewish people, voiced in all pro-Palestinian demonstrations and on social media (n.d., 2023a).

In contrast, many around the world participated in pro-Israeli demonstrations (n.d., 2023c) and many world leaders came to support Israel in its time of need. Leading the supporters was US president Joe Biden, who came only several days after the massacre and said, “I am coming to Israel to stand in solidarity against the brutal terrorist attack by Hamas” (Eichner, 2023a). Other leaders who came were President of France Emmanuel Macron (Eichner, 2023b), Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz (Eichner, 2023c), and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (Eichner, 2023d). Beyond the fact that many demonstrations in support of either Israel or Hamas are taking place around the world, Israel has also been charged in the International Court of Justice in the Hague. The charge was brought by the South African government, supported by Arab states and Turkey, with the US and Germany in favor of Israel.

The current study is the first to examine whether Holocaust-related concepts and displays can be used in reference to the events of October 7, 2023, in Israel, and to what degree. Do the comparison or similarity between the events result in disparagement or in reducing the enormity of the Holocaust, and to what degree, or do they on the contrary serve to illustrate these events?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Second World War, the largest war in human history, lasted from 1939-1945. It is estimated that more than 60 million people were killed in this war, including by the two atom bombs. In the Jewish context, the Holocaust was perpetrated during the war, where some six million Jews, one third of the Jewish people, were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators, most on European soil. The Holocaust is the greatest tragedy in Jewish history (Lewin et al., 2023). Despite the Jewish people's lengthy history of persecution, the Nazi extermination had unique features – including meticulous plans for annihilating the Jewish people, the implementation of these plans, and the destructive outcome consisting of the systematic murder of six million Jews. The Holocaust had a deep impact on the world in general and on the Jewish people.

Reference to the events of October 7, 2023, in Israel using Holocaust-related concepts and displays emerged within the public-journalistic discourse, the leadership-political discourse, and the academic discourse. The statement by Israel's president, who compared the events of October 7 to the Holocaust, is one of many expressions and visual representations that utilize this parallel in an array of categories, for example:

Feelings and emotions: The sense of helplessness at the attacks perpetrated on October 7 within towns in Israeli territory. The events occurred, symbolically, on the morning of Simchat Torah, a Jewish festival, when some of Israel's citizens were in the synagogues, another symbol of Jewish culture. They generated a strong sense of lack of personal safety; a perceived breach of trust between the citizens and the military and political leaders who did not provide protection, failed to predict the tragic event, and in the first hours did not respond; a sense of disparity between the catastrophe that occurred in Israel and events in several other countries, due to the steep rise in antisemitic displays; grave disappointment in humanity, as the barbaric behavior violated all elementary human codes and rules; and perhaps even questions regarding faith and religion, as well as the ways of God. These feelings and emotions raise associations of the Holocaust period.

Extreme violence: Hamas terrorists, engraved in the Israeli discourse as Hamas-ISIS, murdered hundreds of people in their homes and in the streets. The violence was also manifested in the cruel rape of many women who were subsequently murdered. Nearly all those murdered were mutilated to render them inhuman (Eichner, 2023e). Some were identified only two months after the day they were murdered. The murders were coupled by abductions. Some 250 men and women, elderly and children, including babies a few months old, were abducted to the tunnels of Hamas for lengthy months and there too, as testified by abductees who have been released, they were subjected to much physical and mental abuse (Chekhanover, 2024).

Another dimension is the unfathomable hatred by Hamas, whom some have designated Nazis, based on their murderous ideology. The Hamas organization, similar to the Nazis, perceive the Jews as a diabolical enemy that must be eradicated. This leads

to justifying extreme displays of cruelty against the victims, as is expanded on below. In addition, both during the Holocaust and on October 7 there were displays of disregard by some world leaders, as well as displays of antisemitism and justification of the extreme violence (Dorot & Davidovich, 2022a). For instance, UN secretary general António Guterres justified the violent acts by saying that the deadly Hamas attack “didn’t happen in a vacuum” (Eichner, 2023f); women’s organizations did not condemn the mass rapes perpetrated in Israel (Gil-Ad, 2023).

The topic of the Holocaust is a sensitive one within the Israeli public sphere. Nonetheless, following the events of October 7 quite a few comparisons were made between the Holocaust and the massacre on Simchat Torah, due to the need to give voice to the extent of the horror and the deep blow experienced by the Israeli public. Despite the differences versus the Holocaust with regard to the duration, the number of those murdered, the method of annihilation, the fact that the Holocaust occurred in a reality that included no sovereign Jewish state – on October 7 a pogrom, rape, and destruction of Jewish towns were executed, in a reality that includes a sovereign Jewish state and in its territory, despite the strong army that should have provided defense against such events. The Jewish and Israeli public entered a state of shock at the failure to predict, defend, and respond, enhanced by the multiple cases of murder, rape, and abuse. The comparison to the Holocaust is an expression of this shock and rage.

## COMMON ELEMENTS – NAZI IDEOLOGY AND HAMAS IDEOLOGY

There are essential differences between the Nazi ideology and the ideology of the Hamas movement, side by side with the considerable similarities; one way or another, their common ultimate target is the annihilation of Jews. Nazism is based on racist-antisemitic conceptions. It has no religious foundation, although it utilized traditional Christian hatred of Jews as the basis for the hatred it spread. Nazism strove to build a new society based on a racist order that had no room for Jews. In the Nazi conception, the very existence of Jews prevents the existence of the social-human-racial order they espoused, which is why they acted to destroy the entire Jewish people. Hamas in contrast, although hating Jews based on Islam, does not strive to destroy Jews throughout the world but rather only in the land of Israel (Dana, 2013; Marcus, 1993). This will allow it to return the land to Islam, as part of a greater Muslim ideology whereby violence should be used to impose the rule of Islam, similar to the actions of the ISIS movement (Davidovitch & Dana, 2016).

Let us clarify the origins of Hamas. Hamas is a radical Muslim movement that bases its ideology regarding the Jews on Islam. In suras 2, 5, and 7, the Qur’an states that the Jews are monkeys or pigs, for example: “They are those whom Allah has subjected to His curse and to His wrath; and He has turned some of them into apes and swine”

(Rubin, 2016, Sura 5:60). Elsewhere in the Qur'an, the Jews are compared to donkeys (Rubin, 2016, Sura 62:5). This dehumanization of Jews is fertile basis for antisemitism and for justifying mass murder.

These statements join a statement in the Sahih Muslim, one of the six most important hadith books in Suni Islam, with which Hamas is affiliated:

The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree and a stone or a tree would say: Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him (*Salih Muslim*, n.d., Book 54, ḥadīth 103).

The process of justifying the mass murder of Jews through dehumanization and antisemitism takes place in three stages. The first stage is collective labeling: the nature of the Jews is evil at base; the second is generating a threat: The Jews are an existential danger to the entire human species; the third is preaching elimination of the threat: annihilation of the Jews: "The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them."

The process and call for annihilation of the Jews exists in the Hamas charter. This is the foundation document of the Hamas terror organization; it has a distinctly anti-western and antisemitic character, based on a radical Muslim worldview. The charter declares its intention to destroy the state of Israel through violent struggle. It was published in 1988 and written mainly by Ahmed Yassin, founder of the organization, based on Muslim sources, the Quran and the hadith, to grant it religious meaning. Yassin also claimed that it was written by the "hand of Allah" (Hamas, 2006, art. 34), a statement that grants it utmost value as perceived by its followers.

The charter claims that the struggle for the land of Israel is a religious struggle and that there is no room for compromise (Hamas, 2006, art. 15). The land of Israel is categorized as "dar al-Islam," religious property designated by Khalif Omar ibn al-Khatab until the day of the resurrection, which is why there is no legitimacy or authorization to relinquish any part of it. All Muslims, including women and slaves, are obligated to participate in a Jihad, a holy war, to return the land to its "owners."

According to the charter, the land of Israel is "the heart of the earth, the meeting of the continents, and the lure of the avaricious since the dawn of history" (Hamas, 2006, art. 34). The goal is that "the country may return to its rightful place, and so that the call may be broadcast over the Minarets proclaiming the Islamic state" (Hamas, 2006, art. 9). Hamas claims that Jewish settlement in the land of Israel is illegitimate and that "Israel with its Jewishness and its Jewish population challenges Islam and Muslims" (Hamas, 2006, art. 28). Since the struggle is religious and uncompromising, the charter determines that "Withdrawal from the circle of struggle is high treason and a curse on the doer" (Hamas, 2006, art. 32).

The charter is replete with antisemitism and delegitimization of the Jews, accusing them of all negative historical events in the world and of wishing to take over the world:

With wealth they controlled the international mass media... With money they ignited revolutions... They are behind the French Revolution, the Communist Revolution... They are behind the First World War in which they destroyed the Islamic Caliphate... They created the League of Nations so they could control the world... They are behind the Second World War... forming the United Nations and Security Council... There is not a war that goes on here or there in which their fingers are not playing behind it ( Hamas, 2006, art. 22).

The charter is based, among others, on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the most well-known antisemitic propaganda document, which claims that the Jewish people control the world. The document was forged by the Okhrana, the secret police of Tsarist Russia, and first distributed in 1903 and subsequently used to justify Nazism and the Holocaust.

We shall now review the similarities between the ideology of Hamas and the Nazi ideology. Both the Nazis and Hamas see the Jews as the major cause of the world's confrontations and destruction.

The more I came to know the Jew, the easier it was to excuse the workers... the original authors of this evil which has infected the nations were devils incarnate. For only in the brain of a monster, and not that of a man, could the plan of this organization take shape whose workings must finally bring about the collapse of human civilization and turn this world into a desert waste... Should the Jew, with the aid of his Marxist creed, triumph over the people of this world, his Crown will be the funeral wreath of mankind (Hitler, 1939, p. 93).

Both the Nazis and Hamas saw all-out war against the Jews as the only solution: "The only alternative left was to fight, and in that fight to employ all the weapons which the human spirit and intellect and will could furnish" (Hitler, 1939, p. 93). Both the Nazis and Hamas are motivated by a radical ideology, in the belief that they are carrying out God's work and bidding: "I believe to-day that my conduct is in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator. In standing guard against the Jew, I am defending the handiwork of the Lord" (Hitler, 1939, p. 93).

Both the Nazis and Hamas strove in theory and in practice to eradicate the Jews. Hitler declared as much already in his speech to the Reichstag, on January 30, 1939:

If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe (Domarus, 1962, p. 671).

Israel's president Isaac Herzog revealed in an interview to the BBC that a copy of *Mein Kampf* was found in Gaza:

This is the book that led to the Holocaust and the book that led to World War II. This book was found a few days ago in northern Gaza, in a children's room, which became a base used for terrorist activities by the terrorist organization Hamas. The terrorist wrote notes, marked

the sections, and studied again and again, Adolf Hiler's ideology to hate the Jews, to kill the Jews, to burn and slaughter Jews wherever they are. This is the real war we are facing (Eichner, 2023g).

Indeed, the two murderous ideologies have much in common.

## **SYMBOLS – ERDAN AND THE YELLOW STAR IN THE UN**

Symbolic reactions comparing the events of October 7 and the Holocaust were not late in coming. One example is permanent representative of Israel to the UN, Gilad Erdan, who wore a yellow star on his lapel at the UN General Assembly and attacked the conduct of the UN. Erdan said, "When Jewish babies were burned in Auschwitz, the world was silent, and today Jewish babies were burned in Be'eri and the towns of the south by the Nazi Hamas – and the world is silent again" and "We walk with a yellow star as a symbol of pride. A reminder that we swore to fight back to defend ourselves" (Eichner, 2023h).

Not everyone was happy with the comparison. Dani Dayan, chairman of Yad Vashem, Israel's official institution for commemorating the Holocaust, argued that "this act denigrates both the victims of the Holocaust and the state of Israel." He said that The yellow star signifies the helplessness of the Jewish people and the fact that it is at the mercy of others. We now have an independent state and a strong army. We are the masters of our own destiny." (Eichner, 2023h).

Also the Chair of the Center of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel, Collette Avital, criticized the wearing of the yellow star at the UN:

The act of the representative to the UN is cheap, humiliating, and outrageous. It is a diminishing of the Holocaust. We are not a defenseless nation, this is not a Holocaust, the UN are not Nazis, and we also have friends around the world. Enough with the cheap gimmicks (Eichner, 2023h).

## **BETWEEN THE JOURNEYS TO THE DEATH CAMPS IN POLAND AND THE JOURNEYS TO THE SETTLEMENTS IN THE GAZA ENVELOPE**

Since the 1960s the death camps in Poland have become a site of pilgrimage. This gradually increased as the journey was subsequently undertaken by high schoolers, youth movements, and the IDF as well, beginning from the 1980s. The reasons for the pilgrimage to the death camps in Poland are varied. For instance, in 1991 the Ministry of Education published a special circular defining the aims of the journey to Poland as an outcome of the commitment towards the next generation, which includes im-

parting historical, moral, and educational meanings, both Jewish-Israeli-Zionist and human-universal (Atzili, 1995).

Since the journeys to Poland began, they have been the focus of major arguments, with some objecting and others in favor (Davidovitch & Soen, 2011). At present, however, after the events of October 7, there is a call to replace the journeys to Poland with a journey to the settlements in the Gaza envelope, for instance Kibbutz Be'eri where more than 100 people were murdered, including entire families, and houses completely destroyed, burned with their inhabitants inside. Just like in the Holocaust. For example, journalist Amit Slonim wrote:

Kibbutz Be'eri should not be rehabilitated, but rather preserved. The greatest tragedy of the Jewish people since the Holocaust should be commemorated. Israeli high schools from all over the country should visit it. Hear the stories of the survivors, see the burned houses... a tour of the Gaza envelope should become part of the studies for the matriculation exam of all Israelis. Like high schoolers' journeys to Poland (Slonim, 2024).

Journalist Yehuda Shlezinger also wrote, "This place should be like the 'journey to Poland' of 2023" (Shlezinger, 2023). Their claim is that it is not necessary to go as far as Poland to feel the Holocaust and its meaning for Israeli Jews.

## USE OF HOLOCAUST TERMS IN A SATIRICAL CONTEXT

The comparison was also manifested in satire (Vipers, 2023). For instance, in the picture of the gates to the Auschwitz death camp, the German inscription "Arbeit macht Frei" ["Work liberates"] was replaced by the inscription "Didn't happen in a vacuum," in a biting protest against the words of UN secretary general António Guterres, who justified the massacre by saying that "the attacks by Hamas didn't happen in a vacuum" (Eichner, 2023f).

Another alternative inscription on the entrance gates to Auschwitz is "Depends on the context" (Alster, 2023), a satirical response to the words of the three US ivy league university presidents in front of the American congress, who refused to admit that calling for the murder of Jews is antisemitic, saying only that it "depends on the context."

## FOR AND AGAINST: COMPARING THE HOLOCAUST AND OCTOBER SEVENTH

Prof. Havi Dreifuss, professor of Jewish history at Tel Aviv University and head of the Center for Research on the Holocaust in Poland at Yad Vashem, responded to the question of whether the events of October 7 can be compared to the Holocaust:



Without going into appalling descriptions – the nature of the murders... the unfathomable cruelty to women, children, the elderly, and others – are similar to the period of the Holocaust in certain features and particularly in the experience of the victim... It is understandable why the terrible acts of murder and abuse perpetrated on *Simchat Torah* in the Gaza envelope arouse among many associations of the Holocaust, not without cause (Segev, 2023).

Then again, Prof. Uriya Shavit of Tel Aviv University, head of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, claimed that:

On one hand comparisons can be drawn, as Hamas is indeed an antisemitic movement, but on the other, these crimes were not occasioned by antisemitic motives but rather by territorial motives, and this can certainly not be compared or equaled to what happened in Auschwitz or in any other place (Segev, 2023).

On November 9, 2023, Bar-Ilan University held a panel discussion entitled The title was: “Hamas = Nazis? The Black Sabbath = a Holocaust?” Later, Ariel University held a webinar on January 28, 2024, entitled “The Holocaust and the Massacre of October 7, 2023: A Second Holocaust or a National Tragedy?” where views supporting and objecting to comparisons to the Holocaust were voiced. Yad Vashem published a document referring to the comparisons made between the Holocaust and October 7 (Schuster, 2023).

Mia Shem, one of the women abducted, who was released after 54 days, compared her experience to the Holocaust, and stated, “I went through a Holocaust, they’re all terrorists” (n.d., 2023b). Holocaust survivors also equated the events and issued a strong message to the UN. For example, Shmil Berko stated:

I am going back 82 years, to what I went through in my childhood during the Holocaust. When Jews are killed the entire world closes its ears, but when the Jewish people fight for their life – the entire world criticizes us (Porsher, 2024).

Some support the comparison and others object to it. Let’s begin with several examples of objectors to the comparison.

## Against

Rabbi Chaim Navon, religious Zionist rabbi (Mashiach, 2020), author and journalist, objected to the comparison:

Nothing in human experience resembles the Holocaust... and not only because of the magnitude of the number of victims... because it created an enormous political and military system that was completely devoted to genocide... it does not resemble anything else (Navon, 2023).

Tova Herzl, Israeli ambassador to various countries, objected to the comparison (Herzl, 2023). Ofra Lax, a journalist who also lost her son in this war, said:

So you can say that Hamas terrorists are Nazis, but don't call that awful day a Holocaust... anyone who calls it a Holocaust detracts from the memory of the most terrible event in human history... Don't say Holocaust, because we have a state. Because that same morning fighters came from many IDF units, as well as police officers and members of the security forces, and hastened to defend the kibbutzim and moshavim and towns in the [Gaza] envelope; don't say Holocaust, because in their courageous spirit and with their weapons they came and fought and killed and chased away and pursued the terrorists, and the massacre was halted and since then we have been the assailants. We have the privilege of living in an entirely different era (Lax, 2023).

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, former Chief Rabbi of Israel and a Holocaust survivor, joined those rejecting the comparison: "There is no resemblance or [room for] comparison between the massacre in the Gaza envelope and the Holocaust" (Rahav Meir, 2024). Thus also Dr. Shuki Friedman, vice president of the Jewish People Policy Institute and a lecturer in law at the Peres Academic Center, who said "Not a second Holocaust." He, too, focuses on the ability to respond as the issue that rules out such a comparison.

While six million Jews were led to the slaughter without the ability to defend themselves, Israel is still a regional power – in pain but very much alive and vibrant. Despite the terrible blow of that Shabbat, Israel is fully mobilized and fiercely fighting back... The unflinching mobilization of citizens to come to the aid of their fellow citizens and the massive enlistment into the IDF, are... a ray of hope lighting the darkness. (Friedman, 2023)

## **In Favor**

Nonetheless, there were those who made comparisons between the horrendous events. For example, President Isaac Herzog, calling upon the international community to denounce Hamas, made a stark comparison, stating:

Not since the Holocaust have so many Jews been killed in one day. And not since the Holocaust have we witnessed scenes of Jewish women and children, grandparents – even Holocaust survivors – being herded into trucks and taken into captivity (Segev, 2023).

Also, government ministers, senior spokespersons, and media professionals designated the massacre a "Holocaust," "Auschwitz," and "worse than Mengele". In academia as well, comparisons were made. For example, Prof. Liat Shteir-Livni (2023), a researcher of Holocaust memory at the Sapir Academic College, offered "Seven reasons that it is imperative to compare the massacre to the Holocaust":

I would like to confront the claim that the massacre of October 7 should not be compared to the Holocaust, and to say clearly: We must make the comparison. Here are several important points:

Definition: The biblical prophets (Isaiah, Zephaniah) used the word *shoah* (Holocaust) to describe a danger posed by neighboring nations. In other books (Job, Psalms) the word expresses distress, pain, torment, destruction, and calamity...

Numbers: Those who claim that no comparison should be made say that the word “Holocaust” should only describe annihilation in huge numbers. So... some 1,500 victims murdered in one day is a huge number...

Aims: The aim of the Nazis was to annihilate the Jews. The aims of Hamas and of the other terrorist organizations operating beside them are the same...

Identification: ...In demonstrations allegedly directed only at supporting the innocent in the [Gaza] strip, many swastikas and other Nazi elements can be seen...

Propaganda: Watching videos of Hamas summer camps clarifies that the organization begins the dehumanization of Jews at a very early age. Children in Gaza are taught that Jews are a Satan that must be eliminated. This process of indoctrination is very familiar from Nazi Germany, where the educational system was programmed to assimilate the justification for genocide from an early age.

Methods of action: ...The Nazis came to liquidate the ghetto... They came with blow-torches, went from house to house and burned them down. Some of the Jews were burned alive, others were compelled to run out to the Germans. From the horrible acts on October 7, it is clear that the planners learned this method well... people were forced to run out of their safe rooms and others were burned in their homes...

Robbery: ...The Holocaust, beyond the horrific murder of millions of Jews, was the greatest act of robbery in the world... the videos of Palestinians... entering the kibbutzim to rob and steal, echo what we already know.

Many other similarities can be expanded on and comparisons should certainly be made...

An organization that aims to annihilate the Jews is a Nazi organization. The Holocaust is an idea, an ideal. Hamas has no interest in a political solution. They want a final solution. (Shteir-Livni, 2023)

Dr. Doron Matza of Bar-Ilan University, who specializes in the Middle East, compared the events as well. He claimed, “Despite its uniqueness, the Holocaust is not a phenomenon that should be fenced in. It can be related to... It can’t be accorded the status of a museum display” (Matza, 2023).

Senior rabbis also compared between the events. For instance, the Chief Rabbi of France, Rabbi Haïm Korsia, in a speech during the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, said: “A direct line runs from Auschwitz to Be’eri... the cry is the same cry, and the terrible silence that comes after – is that same silence” (Davidovitch & Dorot, 2021; Dorot & Davidovich 2022b; Tanami, 2024). Hence, opinions seem to be divided.

## CONCLUSION

This article examined the concept of the Holocaust perpetrated on European soil, with reference to the events of October 7, 2023, in Israel. The research findings indicate a fundamental difference between the Holocaust and the events of October 7. During the Holocaust in Europe, Jews were in a state of exile, helplessness, and particularly inability to respond to the terrible injustice done to them. However, on October 7 in Israel, Israeli Jews are living in an independent state of Israel, in the land of Israel, and above all – they have a strong army capable of defending, responding, and taking revenge.

In addition, after the Holocaust of European Jewry there was no place to which the survivors could return or relocate; no one wanted to take them in. After the events of the October 7 massacre, in contrast, the state of Israel aided by the IDF declared war and embarked on extensive actions in the Gaza strip – the Swords of Iron war. The comparison that teachers can make in the classroom with their students, emphasizing the ability to respond powerfully, offers some consolation.

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION: THE CHALLENGE OF REMEMBERING, BETWEEN AUSCHWITZ AND BE'ERI

The voyages to Poland have become an important pedagogic tool in Holocaust instruction within education systems throughout the world. Will Be'eri, Nir Oz, and Kfar Aza become memorial sites?

For all delegations from Israel and other countries, Auschwitz has remained the symbol emblematic of the Holocaust, as well as its synonym. Will Be'eri, Nir Oz, and Kfar Aza become symbols? What is the meaning of this symbol?

We risk banalization and popularization of memory, while missing the supreme goal of understanding the past to prevent it from recurring. How shall we safeguard the events of October 7 from banalization of their memory?

Holocaust remembrance is not merely historical. The journey to Poland is part of teaching civic responsibility. Will the events of October 7 become part of civics studies in Israel?

The journeys to Auschwitz require teacher training, as the teacher has a major role in the learning process aroused by the journey: on the cognitive, emotional, and ethical level. Will we train teachers to perpetuate the memory of the October 7 events, and how?

School students are encountering shock and must handle it. To see the huge and complex place in a “concise journey”, only several hours are devoted to Auschwitz-Birkenau, following a route that is dictated in advance. What about the visualization of the October 7 sights?

It seems that Israel's educational system is standing before a complex challenge, in the context of education and regarding the internalization of the October 7 events among Israel's students.

## COGNITIVE VALUE: THE BATTLE OVER THE NARRATIVE

What will remain of the event? A consciousness of holocaust or of bravery? A sense of failure or of achievement and victory? Faith in human fortitude and spirit or despair, destruction, and hopelessness? The graduates of the educational system are the citizens of tomorrow. Hence, the educational system and the teachers have a crucial role in shaping memory and in learning the lessons.

In his book *By Virtue of Normality: Five Essays on the Questions of Zionism*, A. B. Yehoshua (1980) refers to the narrative regarding the Holocaust:

The post-Holocaust world is not the same world as before the Holocaust. The horizon of humanity has been breached. It is necessary to reexamine several of the basic terms we live with... We must see the Holocaust as a giant historical crossroads, from which different roads depart in different directions, where taking each of these roads is self-justified: despair of the world versus belief and desire to repair it, reinforcement of one's faith in God, or the opposite – loss of faith, the normalcy of Jewish existence, or the opposite – irrevocable proof that this existence is not normal... In this terrible crossroads each individual must make an ideological choice... We have all become bowed down by this powerful event... But we must take care not to form irresponsible connections with the term Holocaust, which might have the effect of reducing the intensity of the Holocaust. We... who have the obligation to remember, must be particularly loyal to the factual accuracy of historical events and their proper proportions. And ultimately – the experience of the Holocaust, although a distinctly Jewish experience, has eternal meaning for humanity in general... The events of this terrible war have expanded the concept of humanity, the possibilities encompassed by humanity. It taught us things we did not know about human nature, for good and for bad. Beside the terrible despair also hope may be born. We who were there and came out of there can and even must raise the banner of faith in humanity. (Yehoshua, 1980, p. 25).

These words appear to reverberate with reference to the events of October 2023 as well.

Research findings indicate that shaping the remembrance of the October 7, 2023, events has the potential of instigating an ethical shift, as did the events of the Holocaust. The educational system must construct a coherent, multidisciplinary study program on the lessons of the events and their meaning, from a particular and universal perspective, strengthening Jewish values, both Zionist and humanist, while adapting the contents for school children of different ages. The study programs will include

texts from general culture and from Jewish culture, capable of providing assistance in handling the grave events and their meaning.

The program will include classroom studies beside memorial ceremonies, displays, tours, and encouraging initiatives for preserving remembrance. The events of October 7 should be taught in a way that reflects how the events occurred, comparing them to grave events experienced by the Jewish people in the past, while focusing on the differences. For example, the importance of having an independent Jewish state and of the IDF's response. Beside memories of the past, it is crucial to focus on unity, hope, mutual help, and civic engagement, for the purpose of creating a better future. This, based on the dissimilarities between the presence in independent Israel and the exilic past, between the helplessness and the capacity for military response, between uprooting the homes and their destruction in the past and building and settling the land of Israel under sovereign rule in the present.

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