

**Inauguration of Yad Vashem Museum**  
Jerusalem, 16 March 2005

**"Bechol Dor Va'dor... in every generation..."**

**Address**

by

**Silvan Shalom**

Deputy Prime Minister

and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel

President Katsav,  
Avner Shalev,  
Presidents,  
Prime Ministers,  
Ministers,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

*Bechol dor vador... in every generation...*

In Jewish tradition, there are experiences so central to our identity, and to our mission, that we are obliged to recall them - and remember their lessons - in every generation.

In every generation, at the Passover Seder, we remember the Exodus.

We recognize that each and every one of us, was liberated from Egypt.

We recognize the horror of slavery and the value of freedom.

Every generation, we are taught, must remember that it, too, stood at Mount Sinai, accepting the moral message that the Jewish people has given to the world.

The brutal history of the 20th century has given the Jewish people a new commandment to remember.

*Bechol dor vador... in every generation, we have to remember the Shoah, and to recognize that we Jews - each and every one of us - were the intended victims of genocide.*

It is our duty to those who came before us - and even more, to those who will come after - to ensure that this chain of remembrance is never broken.

And the professional task of keeping this chain intact, has fallen to Yad Vashem.

It is an awesome, painstaking and urgent task.

It is an awesome task: to be a memorial to the unimaginable.

To take six million victims – over a million children - and give them human faces, voices, so that we can begin to grasp what we will never truly comprehend.

As Eli Wiesel has written: "If I have told you a bit about my past, it is not so you understand; it is so that you know you will never understand."

It is a painstaking task.

To piece together the shreds of memory, the documents and the testimonies, and from them - to weave a fabric.

To tell the story of victimhood and suffering, but also of courage and heroism; the story of destruction, but also of the glory and the scholarship, and the culture that was destroyed.

And it is an urgent task.

We stand today close to the brink of that moment when the Shoah will cease to be memory, and will become history.

When the next generation will not be able to hear the truth from those who lived it, or to see the silent witness of a number on a bare arm.

Keeping the chain of memory alive is urgent today also, because anti-Semitism is on the rise again, in Europe and elsewhere.

Once again, it is becoming fashionable to single out the Jews – and Israel – for blame.

The continued growth of anti-Semitism around the world is a source of deep concern to Israel.

But this is not just a challenge for Israel and the Jewish people.

When Jews are subjected to physical or verbal abuse anywhere, the foundations of civil society everywhere are in danger.

**The battle against anti-Semitism can not be only Israel's. It must be the world's.**

Many governments have taken concrete and welcome initiatives to deal with this problem.

Indeed, the world is more united today in the fight against anti-Semitism, than ever before.

Nevertheless, we all must be more vigilant, and more pro-active.

**We must always remember, that the destruction caused by the Nazis did not begin with tanks or guns, but rather with words, and words alone.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the voices of the survivors begin to fade, we still hear the voices of the deniers – those who would delete from history, six million murders.

Those who deny the Holocaust not only desecrate its victims and abuse its survivors.

They also seek to deprive the world of lessons, that are as crucial today as they were 60 years ago:

- That we must always be vigilant, in the battle against all expressions of anti-Semitism, including those dressed-up as anti-Zionism.
- That we must be uncompromising in combating intolerance, against people of all faiths and ethnicities.
- That technological progress without moral progress, can not bring good; instead, it empowers evil.
- That even in the darkest times, there are those, the Righteous Among the Nations – who show the capacity for human good.
- And that every nation must learn the moral message of the Shoah: never to be victims, never to be perpetrators and never to be bystanders.

Today, the community of nations is standing up to meet these imperatives.

Just six weeks ago, at the initiative of Israel and with the support of over 150 member states, the United Nations convened in Special Session to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the death camps.

This Special Session was a rare, but welcome, expression of international solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people.

It was the first time that an Israeli initiative to convene a session of the UN has ever been successful, and it was also the first time that the UN has ever convened to discuss the Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

On that day just six weeks ago, the community of nations united as one to remember the victims and to reaffirm its commitment to ensuring that no such calamity should ever be repeated.

Today's gathering offers us another opportunity to reaffirm this shared, global pledge – both to the victims and to future generations.

We draw encouragement from the presence of so many world leaders here in Jerusalem, Israel's eternal capital.

Such public acts of solidarity with Israel, and with the memory of the Holocaust, convey crucial messages to the publics on all sides.

In this context, I wish particularly to commend the Secretary General Annan, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fisher and Polish President Kwasniewski for their moral voice and leadership.

At the same time, there is always more that can - and must - be done by governments and leaders, particularly in the field of education.

On this historic day, **I call on governments around the world, to join Israel and Yad Vashem, and to devote all the resources needed to ensure that the horrors of the Holocaust will always be remembered, and that the values of tolerance for all people, will always prevail.**

To preserve the legacy, and to pass it on - this is our mission and this is the mission of Yad Vashem.

Not just to house an eternal light – but to be an eternal light, bearing witness, and carrying forth the lessons of the Shoah – *bechol dor va'dor* - for our children, and for all the generations to come.