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Yad Vashem

We are now marking 50 years of worldwide activity which, on the one hand, is characterized by a firm and confident stand against the establishment and governments, banks and industry giants and, on the other hand, by a concern for the elderly and the ill, the weak and the handicapped. This is a tireless effort to locate those who are lonely and far away even at the other end of the world and grant them the aid they are entitled to by law and not as a favor.

The Jewish people's capacity to recover from the terrible blow it was dealt during the Holocaust and to grow new branches out of the amputated trunks is an amazing story of heroism and vitality. It is the heroism of individuals who survived the inferno and succeeded in building a new life as well as a collective heroism ensuring the eternity of Israel. The Claims Conference has played a major role in this wonderful story of heroism.

As Israel's Minister of Education, I wish to dwell on what is not the main part of the scope of activities of this organization, but rather the main part of its historical contribution: the huge educational enterprise of commemoration, memory and research. There are people who, once haunted by a huge calamity, sink into the trauma, hold onto the past and refuse to recover – and there is another kind of people who decide to gather all of their strength, break away from the calamity, draw a line on the past and direct their whole being toward the future.

The Jewish people decided to produce a new life as well as to remember the Holocaust and not to forget. The memory of the Holocaust is part of the foundation of the Jewish identity of the young generation growing up here in Israel. And so it will be for the next generations as well. In Israel, children and youth, students and researchers express a great deal of interest in studying the Holocaust. They come here, to Yad Vashem, and visit other research and commemorative centers, they travel to Poland to visit the sites of destruction and wish to study and know more.

In Israel and throughout the world, there are dozens of Holocaust research and documentation projects with Yad Vashem at the helm. None of them can be described without mentioning the immense contribution made by the Claims Conference. Rabbi Miller often says that as hard as we try and as much as we succeed, we will never be able to do justice to the victims of the Holocaust, the living and the dead. However, of all of our options, the research and commemorative bodies are the closest thing to doing justice.