



## Jewish Life after the Return:

Dutch and Greek Experiences after the Shoah

Return to Life of Holocaust Survivors in Their Home Countries:  
Commonalities and Peculiarities

Liberation of Jews from the Nazi horror went hand in hand with the gradual liberation of Europe at large - which started in 1943 with the beginning of Soviet victories in Eastern Europe and later that year the landing of the Western Allies in southern Italy, made an important advance in June 1944 with the landing in Normandy and was completed with Nazi Germany's surrender on May 8, 1945.

What were the first paths undertaken by the survivors of the Shoah and Jews in the free world to make sense of what happened to them and to the Jewish People? In this lecture I will point to several acts and directions: 1) describing the immediate past - through collecting testimonies, writing first studies, planning broad-scale research and establishing organizations (centers and historical committees) for that purpose - and trying to learn "lessons"; 2) applying traditional and establishing novel ways of commemoration for the perished - as individuals and as a collective: commemoration days, lamentations, Yizkor-buecher; 3) turning the amorphous notion of "the Jewish People" into a legal reality: claims for material restitution, the World Jewish Congress, the Claims Conference, support for Israel even among non-Zionists, the battle over Jewish war orphans; 4) finding a name for the persecutions and murder.

Finally this lecture will allude to several peculiarities and commonalities in the Netherlands and in Greece when seen in comparison and within the overall picture of the return of survivors: regarding writing the history of the period, terminology to designate the event, the focusing on Auschwitz, the controversies over the "leaders" (Asscher + Cohen/Rabbi Koretz), identity and commemoration.

The workshop aims to investigate the formation of survivor's subjectivities as well as official identities and their mutual relationship after the return.

In my lecture I will focus on the question of reparation, how it influenced Jewish life after 1945 and since the late 1990ies in the Netherlands; discussing results from my Marie Curie research on Narrated Injustice. Compensation claims help individuals to emancipate from a victim status and communities to establish themselves as equal players in society, argues the theory. Is this the case? How did those claims reconstruct subjectivity and collective communities? What were the difficulties in this process? And what do we learn about it when we look from a family memory perspective? Based upon interviews with three-generation Jewish families in the Netherlands and activists I will describe how the ideas of recognition and justice changed over the decades. This will show how the relationship between the family sphere and the public sphere changed in the late 1990ies and the consequences therefrom for the feeling of having (or having not) gained justice.

**Dan Michman** is Professor (Emeritus) of Modern Jewish History and Chair of the Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research at Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan; he is also Head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research and Incumbent of the John Najmann Chair in Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem. He is member of the editorial and editorial advisory boards of several scholarly periodicals (among them: *Yad Vashem Studies*, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, *Zeitschrift für Genozidforschung*, *Quest*, *Democratic Culture*) and of academic committees and boards of institutions in Israel and abroad. He also taught at the Universities of Amsterdam and Toronto and the Dutch Rabbinical Seminary, and lectured at many academic institutions in the world.

Among his authored and co-authored books are: *Het Liberale Jodendom in Nederland, 1929-1943* (1988); *Pinkas. Geschiedenis van de joodse gemeenschap in Nederland* (1992; co-author with Jozeph Michman and Hartog Beem); *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective. Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches and Fundamental Issues* (2003); *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos During the Holocaust* (2011). Among the volumes he edited or co-edited are: *Belgium and the Holocaust: Germans, Belgians, Jews* (1998); *Remembering the Holocaust in Germany, 1945-2000: German Strategies and Jewish Responses* (2001); *De la mémoire de la Shoah dans le monde juif* (2008); *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements* (2008); *Holocaust and Justice* (2010); *Pius XII and the Holocaust. Current State of Research* (2012).