





## Dec. 22: Week in Photography

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### FOR YOUR ONLY: HISTORY AND HANUKKAH WITH YIVO

Since 1925, the [YIVO Institute for Jewish Research](#) has collected and preserved thousands of artifacts that tell the cultural history of Jewish people throughout the world. No item is too small or personal for this archive, which actively accepts donations of everything from family heirlooms to manuscripts and letters.

Today, YIVO houses more than 250,000 photographs that document the Jewish experience since the 1800s. One particular aspect of this experience that points to the resilience and pride of the Jewish people is the photographs of Hanukkah celebrations in displaced persons camps following World War II.

To speak on this inspirational moment in Jewish history, YIVO's acting director of archives, Stefanie Halpern, and exhibitions curator, Eddy Portnoy, shared with BuzzFeed News highlights from their photo collections.



Hanukkah celebration in Neunburg vorm Wald DP Camp, Germany, 1947.

**Eddy Portnoy:** One of the issues in Jewish life is that people know a great deal about how Jews died in World War II and the Holocaust, but they don't know that much about how they lived before and after the war. So these photographs allow you to see how Jews rebuilt their lives after these horrific events.

**EP:** These are people who literally just went through hell. Many of these people are orphans, and their relatives had been murdered. So they're doing what they can to regain any kind of sense of normal life, and holidays like these are one way to do it.

**Stefanie Halpern:** Life was not necessarily great in [displaced persons] camps, but celebrating holidays like Hanukkah was one of the ways that these survivors were able to reconstitute their normal, everyday lives.



School children at a Hanukkah party in the Deggendorf DP Camp, Germany, 1947.

**SH:** Just witnessing the little kids in these pictures is a testament to the renewal of the Jewish people. Many of these children were actually born in these DP camps, some born just before the end of the war or immediately following.

**EP:** Absolutely. The kids are quite literally the reconstitution of Jewish life. They're the newest Jews, and it was so important for the survivors to begin creating families — especially given the fact that their own families were murdered.





Hanukkah performance in the Bindermichl DP Camp, Austria, 1946.

**SH:** For the pictures of the couples dancing at a celebration, I'm actually struck by the fact that they're all wearing what appear to be name tags. So if you take this in contrast to a photo that would have only been taken a few years prior, one of Jews marked by stars on their arms or breast, then those name tags give them back their individual identities and humanity.

**EP:** What's fascinating to me is that by looking at these photos, these brief moments in these people's lives, you're able to glean a sense of who they were and what they were trying to do. This is something that happens after every horrible event: People generally manage to get back on their feet and retrain their humanity in some way.



Hanukkah party at Furstenfeldbruck DP Camp, Germany, ca. 1950.

**SH:** To us, it feels like a very big responsibility to make sure this history is preserved, in part because of what these people went through. We can make sure that the record of their lives before, during, and after the war is available for people to see, research, and learn from.

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