

## Yad Vashem The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority

Israel's national Holocaust memorial. The name *Yad Vashem* comes from a verse in the biblical book of Isaiah that refers to an everlasting memorial. Located on Jerusalem's *Har HaZikaron* (Remembrance Mountain) near the Mt. Herzl complex, Yad Vashem was officially established by Israel's parliament in 1953 in accordance with the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law. The authority was charged with commemorating the six million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis and Nazi collaborators; the Jewish communities of Europe that were destroyed; the heroism of the soldiers, underground fighters, Partisans, and prisoners of the Ghettos; and the Righteous Among the Nations. The law also made the authority responsible to establish memorial projects; gather, research, and publish educational materials about the Holocaust and its lessons; award honorary Israeli citizenship to the victims; and represent Israel internationally with regards to Holocaust commemoration.

Yad Vashem consists of various special areas. The Historical Museum tells the story of the Holocaust chronologically, beginning with Adolf Hitler and his rise to power in Germany in 1933, moving on to the persecution of Jews within the Third Reich, the mass annihilation of European Jewry, armed resistance by the Jews, and the last stages of the Holocaust. The Museum of Art houses an important collection of pieces created during the Holocaust.

The Hall of Remembrance has a tent-shaped roof and a mosaic floor engraved with the names of the 22 largest Nazi Concentration Camps. The hall's Eternal Light is flanked by a vault that holds the ashes of Holocaust victims, brought to Israel from the Extermination Camps in Europe. Commemoration ceremonies are held in the Hall of Remembrance.

The Hall of Names serves as a register of the names of millions of Jews who were killed, while the Children's Memorial commemorates the one and a half million children who died during the Holocaust. The latter consists of a dark building lit by five memorial candles that are multiplied exponentially with the use of mirrors. These lights represent the children whose names are continually read aloud in the background.

There are also many outdoor sites at the Yad Vashem facility. The Garden of the Righteous honors those non-Jews, officially designated by Yad Vashem as "Righteous among the Nations," who risked their lives to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. The awardees are entitled to plant trees along the garden's Avenue of the Righteous among the Nations. Another compelling outdoor site is the authentic German cattle car that represents the victims' final journey. Along the western end of Yad Vashem's memorial hill is the Valley of the Communities. This exhibit includes the names of approximately 5,000 Jewish communities that were destroyed or severely hurt by the Nazis during the Holocaust. The southern section of the hill contains Warsaw Ghetto Square and a monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, where Israel's official state ceremony of Holocaust Remembrance Day is held each year.

Yad Vashem also includes an archives and a library, representing the world's most important collection of Holocaust information. The archives contain roughly 60 million pages of testimonies and documents; the library has over 80,000 books by title and 4,500 periodicals that deal with all aspects of the Holocaust. Yad Vashem has published hundreds of books and recorded the testimonies of tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors. Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies holds study seminars for many audiences in many languages. It places a strong emphasis on teacher training and curriculum development.

As befits an important national shrine, about two million people visit Yad Vashem each year, from both Israel and abroad, Jews and non-Jews alike. Official guests on state visits to Israel go to Yad Vashem as part of their customary program.