

## Museums And Memorial Institutes

(Holocaust Museums and Memorials), in 1999, there were 169 institutions that belonged to the Association of Holocaust Organizations, located all over the world, the bulk in the United States. Most Holocaust organizations are resource centers that contain collections of books and teaching materials, recorded testimonies of Holocaust survivors, and other documentation related to the subject. Many emphasize both Holocaust education and commemorative activities.

Over 30 Holocaust organizations have museums, each with its own focus and specialty. In Israel, the two largest Holocaust museums are at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, which was established in 1953, and *Beit Lohamei Haghettaot*, the Ghetto Fighter's House in the Galilee, opened in 1949. These museums, more than those in other countries, accentuate the commemoration of the murdered Jews. They emphasize seeing the events through Jewish eyes, and view Jews not as helpless victims who were simply led to the slaughter, but rather as active people who responded to the persecution and did the best they could under the circumstances.

The three most important Holocaust museums in America focus on other issues. The Simon Wiesenthal Center/Museum of Tolerance, opened in Los Angeles in 1993, challenges visitors to think about how the Nazis could have done such evil and stresses the need for a pluralistic and tolerant society. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, located on the mall in Washington D.C., was also opened in 1993. The focus in that museum is on the Americans---the liberators, and the bystanders. Visitors in Washington are confronted with the question of how Americans could have known about the exterminations in Europe, and yet allowed them to continue; how much was really known, by whom, and what was their response. This museum, situated right near the American government, implies that the lessons of the Holocaust are relevant to all Americans. The Museum of Jewish Heritage/A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, located in New York City, depicts the events of the

Holocaust in the context of Jewish culture and Jewish experience in the twentieth century.

In Great Britain Beth Shalom offers an exhibit about the Holocaust as does a wing of the Imperial War Museum. Among the former Extermination Camps, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek, and Treblinka have become sites of pilgrimage for people from all over the world. In Germany, many of the former Concentration Camps, among them Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, and Sachsenhausen, are sites of visitation and commemoration.