THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS CONTEXTS

The Holocaust Memorial Museum

Sacred Secular Space

Avril Alba

The Holocaust and its Contexts

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Dedicated to the memory of my father
Solomon Alba (z"l)
1922–1997

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Introduction

> Historical events are mute.
> They do not bespeak any given metahistorical interpretations;
> The interpretation explains the event, not *vice versa*.[1]
>
> (Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*)

On 3 March 2006, the Sydney Jewish Museum (SJM) accessioned into its collection a burnt and torn Torah scroll. The scroll originated from Brzostek, a small town located in the Subcarpathian region of south-eastern Poland. Adam Szus, one of less than ten Brzostek Jews to survive the Second World War, brought the scroll with him to Australia when he migrated in 1959. Szus had survived a Nazi forced labour camp and participated in active resistance against the Nazis as a member of a partisan group. The Torah also survived, having been rescued by a non-Jewish resident of the town during the burning of the Brzostek synagogue by the invading Nazi forces. After the war, the same resident sought out Jewish survivors in an attempt to return the sacred text to its owners. Szus stored the Torah in his home for many years, finally deciding to donate it to the SJM so that it might find 'a new home … among the Jews' and 'serve as a reminder of his people's past in Poland'.[2] The scroll's origins were verified, and it was duly accessioned and deposited in the SJM archives to await its fate. But what, exactly, was this fate to be?

The Brzostek Torah held many possibilities for the SJM's curators as they pondered its historical, cultural and symbolic importance, and considered where best it might be placed.[3] Displayed as part of a Holocaust history exhibition, it could serve as a reminder of the

richness and diversity of European Jewish life in the interwar period, a 'surviving remnant' of a 'world that was'. Alternately, it could be positioned further along in the chronology of the Second World War – its ripped and torn appearance a visceral reminder of the brutality of the German occupation in the East, the fate of Polish Jewry in particular and the destruction of the thousand-year-old Polish Jewish culture that was the result of the Nazi genocide. Or perhaps the scroll would be more poignantly deposited in a section on migration, in particular the migration of survivors to Australia, the country that accepted more Holocaust survivors per capita than any other outside Israel – notwithstanding Australia's discriminatory immigration quotas against Jews at the time.[4] Displayed within a migration context, the Torah bespeaks the twin historical experiences of survivors: tragedy and renewal, destruction and rebirth.

Any or all of these choices maintain the historical integrity of the object, with each possible placement telling a different part of the Torah's story while simultaneously illustrating a larger theme of Holocaust history. Yet the ultimate fate of the object was to be different again. The Torah is positioned in a long-range timeline comprising three thousand years of Jewish history where space to illustrate both the Second World War and the Holocaust was necessarily limited. The scroll stands alone as a symbolic reminder of destruction, the ripped and torn parchment embodying the devastation of two millennia of Jewish life in Europe. While still 'historical', the curatorial choice to display the object in this context emphasizes the emblematic over the specific, the story of the scroll a microcosm of the larger story of the destruction of European Jewry.

Not content to allow the object to 'speak for itself', the curatorial and design team added yet another layer of meaning to an object already pregnant with historical significance. They framed the scroll from floor to ceiling within the following excerpt from Australian historian and writer Mark Baker's *The Fiftieth Gate* (Figure I.1):

> Our Sages remember:
> Rabbi Hanina Ben Teradion was studying the Torah
> and holding a Scroll of the Law to his chest.
> Our enemies took hold of him, wrapped him in the Scroll,
> placed bundles of branches around him and set them on fire.
> His disciples called out, 'Rabbi, what do you see?'
> He answered them,
> 'The parchment is burning but the letters are soaring
> high above me'.

My parents remember:
The fire
The parchment burning
The bodies buried
Letters soaring high,
Turned to ashen dust.[5]

The first eight lines are a famous description of Jewish persecution under Roman occupation in second-century Palestine – Ben Teradion is being executed for his flaunting of Roman decree and his continued public teaching of Torah. Burnt in the scroll he refused to forsake, Ben Teradion's response to his students' question is at once an acclamation of faith but also a radical (re)interpretation of history. Ben Teradion implores his students not to interpret his execution as the 'end of history', a symbol of Judea's devastation under Roman occupation. Rather, he assures them that the meaning of his martyrdom is to demonstrate the eternal and indestructible nature of the Law (the parchment is burning but the letters are soaring high above me), and, by extension, the eternal nature of the Jewish people. He does not seek to understand the cause and effect of a historical event but rather what this event might mean within the covenantal framework of a sacred historical mission. Ben Teradion speaks not of history but of metahistory.[6]

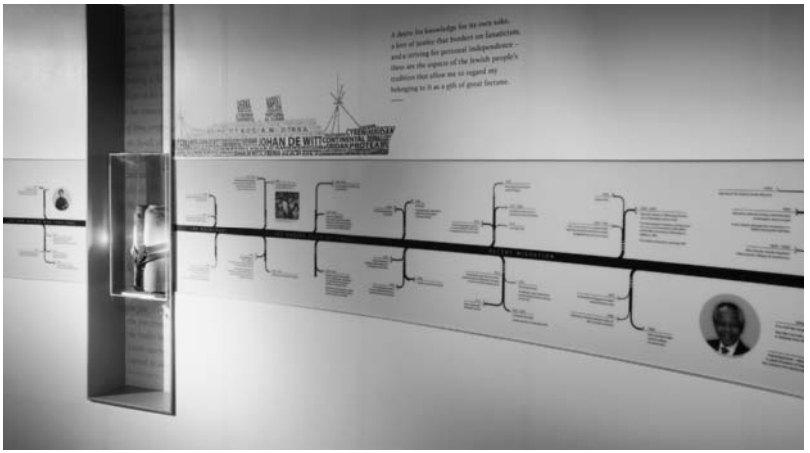

Figure I.1 Sydney Jewish Museum, Brzostek Torah scroll

Similarly, in the second half of the excerpt, Baker's own *midrash* asks not what the Holocaust *was* in a historical sense, but what *meaning* this history might hold. Taking the ashes of the crematoria as his historical point of departure (letters soaring high, turned to ashen dust), Baker questions whether Ben Teradion's vision of a sacred history, framed by a covenantal promise, still holds true for Jewish life and civilization today. In six short lines, Baker 'lifts' the Holocaust from the realm of history into metahistory, rejecting, or at the very least challenging, traditional Jewish covenantal claims in light of the historical experience of the Holocaust. In so doing, he posits 'the' question for Jewish belief in the post-Holocaust age; do the flames of Auschwitz negate the promise of Sinai? The historical experience begets a metahistorical question; the question, however, cannot be answered through reflection on the 'facts' of history alone. For the answer both the classical *midrashist* and Baker are seeking is not the 'what' of history but the 'why' – they are inquiring as to the meaning of these historical events in light of a pre-existing covenantal and sacred commitment. Contextualized within the ancient and modern *midrashim*, the Brzostek Torah becomes the physical embodiment of this covenantal quandary.

Further, the very act of placing the scroll in a museum expands its meaning once again; as a text considered sacred to a particular community and utilized only according to the strictures of Jewish ritual law, is transformed into an object for public viewing and individual contemplation. The ripped and burnt Torah references a Jewish tragedy but in its public placement it speaks of that tragedy to a vastly enlarged audience, transmitting the covenantal dilemmas of post-Holocaust theology further than the Jewish world. The decision to place the Brzostek Torah in public view reflects a desire to grapple with the meaning of the Holocaust not only with regard to its impact on Jewish life and thought but also beyond; reinforcing the increasingly common understanding of the Holocaust as a 'watershed' event. In its placement in memorial and museum space, the scroll not only documents and commemorates the suffering of European Jewry under National Socialism, but also inquires as to the meaning of that suffering for western civilization. In its current incarnation, therefore, the Brzostek Torah embodies at once a lost civilization, a covenantal conundrum and a 'question mark' on the conscience of humanity.

The story of the Brzostek Torah scroll is a small but telling example of the potential within Holocaust memorial museums to transform history into metahistory, to find the universal in the particular and in so doing embody what I term 'built theodicies'. Uncovering these

transformations, while laying bare their implications for contemporary understandings and political use of Holocaust history and memory, is the task that lies at the heart of this book.[7] What this work seeks to establish is an understanding of how the Holocaust history and memory displayed in these institutions has a profoundly metahistorical or 'sacred' aspect – one that has been largely overlooked due to the empirical and supposedly 'secular' nature of both historical and museological enterprises. The following consideration of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the new Historical Museum of Yad Vashem and the Sydney Jewish Museum comprise, therefore, not simply institutional histories, but rather explorations of how each museum references and transforms a variety of Jewish sacred narratives, symbols and rituals, and in so doing generates a metahistorical, redemptive and ultimately *eternal* vision of the Holocaust. Through engaging with and transfiguring ancient sacred paradigms these predominantly historical institutions imbue the memory of the Holocaust with an ahistorical quality; transforming a series of discrete historical events that might perhaps best be described as nihilistic, cruel and essentially meaningless, into a timeless and sacred metahistory. In so doing, the historical museum transmits a metahistorical message, one that speaks both of the past and toward the future, thereby constructing the Holocaust's place in the present as a 'watershed Event',[8] heralding and shaping a new age.

1
The Holocaust Memorial Museum: A Built Theodicy

> In days to come, your children will surely ask:
> What is the meaning of these stones to you?
> (Joshua 4:6)[1]

Holocaust memorial museums are increasingly familiar fixtures in the public landscape.[2] As active contributors to the development of communal and national memories, their political role, discernible in the careful weaving of civic values and national narratives into both architecture and display, has been broadly acknowledged.[3] As the larger (and more influential) of these institutions are often state-funded, their very existence serves to frame Holocaust history within distinct national contexts. Subsequently, critiques of these institutions have largely focussed on how Holocaust memorial museums are 'shaped' by the dominant political narratives of the communities, states and nations in which they are developed.[4] However, due to the prevailing understanding of these institutions as 'historical' and 'secular' in nature, their 'metahistorical' and 'sacred' underpinnings are yet to be fully explored and articulated.

While the terms metahistorical and sacred have many varied and rich definitions, in this study I utilize them to refer to the connection to, or transformation of, traditional Jewish responses to destruction evident in these spaces.[5] Indeed, unlike literary and liturgical responses to the Holocaust, Holocaust memorial museums have not been systematically examined in relation to traditional Jewish responses.[6] Nor have the instances where they depart from these paradigms been considered. The reasons for the current lack of research are threefold: First, these institutions are seldom solely Jewish – in fact, more often than not they are funded and run by state authorities. Second, Jewish commemorative

strategies are traditionally rendered through text and ritual.[7] The memorial museum, as a primarily visually-based institution, challenges and extends these approaches. And, in seeking to engage the broader public, any form of 'ritual' enacted in these spaces is necessarily given meaning beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community. Third, the contemporary history museum is commonly understood as the most secular of institutions – an outgrowth of the Enlightenment and a product of the democratization of reason in the scientific age.[8]

Challenging these assumptions, I contend that a sacralization of Holocaust memory is created within these ostensibly secular spaces. For while the exhibition spaces of Holocaust museums are predominantly historical, the memorial practices of these institutions more often than not find their starting points in the sacred symbols, rituals, archetypes and narratives of the Jewish tradition.[9] The result is a space that is at once historical and metahistorical, secular and sacred. In exposing the metahistorical underpinnings of these institutions, the goal is not to suggest a normative religious practice or demonstrate the presence of a systematic theology. Given that these representational forms are often situated at the intersection of the Jewish and broader communities, such conclusions are neither possible nor useful. The aim, therefore, is not to offer theological reasons *for* the Holocaust but to isolate and examine the sacred meanings being ascribed to the Holocaust *after* the event.

In so doing, a propensity toward displaying the Holocaust as a largely 'redemptive' tale in these spaces is revealed. Indeed, I posit that once exposed, these metahistorical narratives and archetypes arguably create a 'built theodicy' – a defence of God in light of evil – transforming the Holocaust into a redemptive vision. Despite their ostensibly secular façades, the concerns of theodicy continue to animate these seemingly secular institutions, albeit in a *sublimated and non-theistic* form. The explicitly theistic element is repressed, but the urge for metahistorical explanation remains. As such, this study sits in opposition to and challenges the oft-heard demand that Holocaust representation forms work toward a decidedly anti-redemptive aesthetic.[10] What the following case studies demonstrate is that contrary to commonly held understandings a redemptive narrative is not necessarily synonymous with a naïve one, nor does it always involve a misguided or superficial quest for 'closure'. Indeed, what is established through a thoroughgoing critique of the redemptive visions of these institutions is that they are anything but simplistic; rather, they comprise profound expressions of the very human desire to ascribe meaning and purpose to otherwise unfathomable suffering.

Further, in the memorial museum, the sacred meanings ascribed to Jewish suffering are forged in tandem with, and *directed toward*, the non-Jewish world. Subsequently, in exploring exactly what kind of sacred memory is being created in these spaces, we are also inquiring about its utility in the public realm. Dan Stone argues that assessing the historiography of the Holocaust is important because, 'to imbed the Holocaust in a given theory of history is immediately to provide it with a moral purpose that the mere record of events does not suggest'.[11] Similarly, I maintain that uncovering and exploring the sacralization of Holocaust memory within the memorial museum provides a more comprehensive understanding of how this memory is harnessed in the name of contemporary causes and concerns. For while the history of the Holocaust continues to be examined in great detail, the memory of the Holocaust will not be dictated by historical scholarship. Rather, Holocaust memory is ultimately subject to the representational paradigms through which it is conveyed. In this vein, an examination of the sacred dimensions of Holocaust museums and memorials uncovers pathways to new understandings of Holocaust memory both within and beyond the Jewish world.

The three museums under consideration, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), the new Historical Museum of Yad Vashem (NHM) and the Sydney Jewish Museum (SJM), provide the comparative framework for exploration.[12] Each institution is first considered historically, its origins outlined and significant points of development delineated. Not intended as 'institutional histories' as such, the description of each institution's growth is not exhaustive, but rather serves to highlight the contribution of key individuals and establish the national and/or communal context within which each institution was developed. This historical consideration, in conjunction with a close reading of both architecture and exhibition display, serves to uncover the underlying Jewish metahistorical symbols, rituals, archetypes and narratives embodied in the space. Once explicit, these sacred concerns are examined against a backdrop of classical Jewish theodicies and instances of continuity and change are outlined.[13] In so doing, the largely redemptive content of these spaces is revealed. This redemptive message is then considered within its public context and its implications for the current construction and dissemination of Holocaust memory both within and beyond the respective institutions laid bare.

Given the complex institution that the contemporary memorial museum comprises, a diverse array of sources was utilized. In addition to conventional archival documentation, museum displays and

architecture were also considered as 'documents'. In other words, exhibitions and architecture are understood both as products of historical research and historical 'texts' in their own right – texts that provide embodied examples of the construction of Holocaust memory. I supplemented the archival record by conducting interviews with key individuals in the development of the respective institutions. These interviews were particularly important for the study of the new Historical Museum at Yad Vashem as most of the documents pertaining to the development of this institution are not yet available for research purposes. Finally, where at all possible, visitor responses were considered. The materials used to gauge such reactions were severely limited given the brief and partial impressions contained in visitor books and the unreliability of 'anecdotal' accounts. However, such accounts have been included where they are useful and their reliability is readily apparent. The use of such a diverse range of sources was a practical necessity, but also reflects the very nature of the institutions under consideration. Memorial museums are developed by a broad range of individuals whose competing ideas, interests and expertise ultimately converge to create a seemingly seamless and integrated space. Only through the examination of an equally wide range of sources, therefore, can one hope to unpick the seams and reveal the pattern, the deep structure upon which these institutions continue to evolve.

Beyond Belief? Rethinking Holocaust Representation

How do we 'know' the Holocaust?[14] What are the various literary, philosophical and artistic forms through which we have received this history and how have these forms contributed to the way that the genocide of European Jewry is understood and imagined? The many and varied attempts to answer these questions have come to define the area of scholarship commonly referred to as Holocaust representation. Indeed, so numerous are such studies that it is now possible to speak of an historiography of Holocaust representation.[15] The evolution of this field bears witness to a desire to comprehend how these representational forms reflect our constantly evolving understanding of a traumatic past; and how they continue to shape commonly held assumptions about the significance of that past in and for the present. For while studies in Holocaust representation are largely interdisciplinary, spanning diverse fields such as history, literary and cultural studies, philosophy and sociology, they share the common purpose to trace and understand what the Holocaust has come to *mean*. In other words, they seek to reveal

how these events continue to intersect with and place demands upon the present.

Given these preoccupations, critical studies in Holocaust representation share many of the concerns found in the burgeoning field of memory studies. Beginning with Maurice Halbwach's *La Mémoire Collective*,[16] scholarly interest in and literature pertaining to 'memory' has increased exponentially in the last three decades. While a comprehensive review of this literature is beyond the scope of this study, an evaluation of seminal works has enabled the construction of a working definition of the term.[17] This definition, while acknowledging that memory is commonly perceived as a private matter based in personal experience, is concerned with the *public expression* of memory as conveyed through diverse representational frameworks. Thus individual memories, as well as biological or medical understandings of the nature and function of memory, are not addressed and individual memory is only considered regarding its interaction with and impact upon collective memory.[18] 'Holocaust memory' is understood, therefore, to comprise a complex and diverse array of representational mediums that extend well beyond the bounds of traditional Jewish commemorative forms, from blockbuster Hollywood epics such as Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List,* to various literary and artistic responses and, most recently, national and international days of Holocaust and Genocide Remembrance.[19]

Unsurprisingly, scholarly debates in the area of Holocaust memory and representation have in many ways mirrored debates within the larger field of Holocaust history. The historical study of the Holocaust was mired in conflict concerning the Holocaust's 'uniqueness', 'incommensurability' and 'incomprehensibility' through the 1980s and into early years of this century.[20] Similarly, debates in the field of Holocaust memory and representation have hinged upon whether the Holocaust can, indeed, be understood and conveyed through conventional representational forms. Finding their ostensible beginnings in Theodor Adorno's oft-quoted (and misquoted) statement, 'to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric',[21] the lines of the debate were drawn between two opposing camps. Literary scholar Alan Mintz describes these positions as falling mainly into two broad categories, which he labels 'exceptionalist' and 'constructivist'.[22] In a similar vein, cultural theorist Michael Rothberg defines these postures as 'anti-realist' and 'realist'.[23] The former admits no comparisons, insisting that the Holocaust can only be represented 'in its own terms', yet often failing to demonstrate how such representational forms are, in actuality, *sui generis*. Based in more popular understandings of the Holocaust as an 'unapproachable object

beyond discourse and knowledge',[24] exceptionalist/anti-realists reject a connection between representational forms pre- and post-Holocaust on both practical and ethical grounds.[25] By contrast, constructivist/realist commentators have been largely concerned with the various 'systems of meaning' through which Holocaust memory is mediated – identifying and exploring the content and influence of the representational frameworks through which this memory is relayed. In other words, they aim to uncover how the various forms of Holocaust representation both *create* and *reflect* Holocaust memory.

Whether these representational forms are entirely 'secular' is a question not often pondered on either side of the debate. Within the preponderance of scholarship concerned with Holocaust representation, the connection of these forms to traditional Jewish tropes receives short shrift. With the exception of seminal surveys of Holocaust literature and liturgy by literary scholars David Roskies and Alan Mintz there exist no systematic studies concerning what I label the 'metahistorical' or 'sacred' elements of Holocaust representation – that is, their connection to, or transformation of, traditional Jewish responses to destruction.[26] Leaving aside these masterly accounts, other attempts in the scholarly literature to connect forms of Holocaust memory and representation to traditional Jewish tropes have been unsatisfying. For example, Zoe Waxman's otherwise admirable work into the significance of Holocaust testimony as both 'sacred' and 'secular' texts, fails to define with precision the meaning of 'sacred' in this instance.[27] In her article, she examines in some detail the following statement from Abraham Lewin, a staff member of the clandestine group *Oneg Shabbat* of the Warsaw Ghetto.[28] Lewin wrote this description of his and other group members' harried attempts to chronicle the destruction of European Jewry under the Nazis:

> We gather every Sabbath, a group of activists in the Jewish community, to discuss our diaries and writings. We want our sufferings, these 'birth pangs of the Messiah', to be impressed upon the memories of future generations and of the whole world.'[29]

Waxman argues that in placing the activities of *Oneg Shabbat* within an explicitly Jewish commemorative trope, writers such as Lewin and Emanuel Ringelblum, the leader of the *Oneg Shabbat* group, understood their work to be part of the 'specifically Jewish imperative to bear witness' and as such were writing in 'a self-consciously Jewish tradition of remembrance'.[30] She asserts that these writers in some sense saw their work as

a 'sacred duty', and she continues from this premise to posit the notion that such testimony was viewed both by those who wrote it and later commentators as comprising a new form of 'Scripture'. While acknowledging the radical nature of this claim with regard to Jewish tradition, Waxman argues for a consideration of testimony as 'a sacred text but also more than a sacred text … a historical record but also more than a historical record'.[31] Her stated purpose is to rescue the historical veracity of testimony, arguing against mystification as an obfuscation of the historical importance of such accounts, while still wanting to acknowledge the sacred content of these writings.

While Waxman's attempt to connect the historical and the sacred in testimonial accounts is important, her definition of what constitutes the 'sacred' in this context becomes quickly muddied. First, she illogically attributes the death of the author as somehow bequeathing a sacred quality to the author's living record. Waxman writes that 'almost all of them [testimonies] come from those who did not survive and therefore in many ways they are indeed sacred texts as they come from beyond the grave'.[32] Sacrality is here confused with supernatural and hence what might be considered sacred about testimony is mystified and perhaps even misrepresented as those who created it were, of course, very much alive at the time of writing. By identifying what might be deemed 'sacred' in testimony as synonymous with 'ineffable', Waxman diminishes the force of her argument. For if the sacred is intrinsically 'mysterious' in origin and hence inexplicable, as opposed to something that can be identified and examined, its utility as a tool for exploring Holocaust memory is limited. Second, in abdicating a rigorous assessment of what the sacred could possibly constitute in this context, she fails to isolate what *is* expressly sacred in Lewin's text beyond the more general idea of 'witnessing' as an authentically Jewish form of sacred obligation.

What is missed is the *redemptive* framework in which Lewin characterizes not only his own work but that of *all* of his fellow chroniclers. They hurry to fulfil their task in the knowledge that their work details nothing less than 'the birth pangs of the Messiah'. This phrase references a classical theodicy[33] found in traditional Jewish thought. In this particular case, the theodicy is couched in the ancient Jewish belief that in the shards of destruction the seeds of redemption are contained, heralding the onset of the messianic age. In a very specific sense, therefore, Lewin indeed understood his historical task as encompassing a sacred obligation. Yet the sacred in this context is not simply confined to the act of 'witnessing', nor is it so mysterious as to be rendered indescribable.

Rather, Lewin understands and describes his very 'historical' act of chronicling the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto as part of a redemptive, sacred or metahistorical paradigm – the eternal Jewish paradigm – the paradigm of covenant. Placed within this framework, the destruction of the ghetto, indeed the destruction of European Jewry, did not signal the end of that covenant or the end of Jewish civilization, but heralded the beginnings of a new and redemptive age. In Lewin's formulation, his writing and those of his compatriots, constituted nothing less than the chronicling of theodicy.

The lack of attention given to explicitly redemptive aspects of Holocaust representation, both within and beyond the period of the Holocaust, may be due to the (misguided) notion that Jewish thought in the modern period has shed its pre-modern providential cast; a posture that complements 'anti-realist/essentialist' beliefs about the fundamentally 'non-representational' nature of the Holocaust.[34] However, this absence in the scholarly literature may also be a reflection of the immense theological and commemorative challenges that the Holocaust presents.[35] Indeed, the Holocaust poses perhaps the most difficult of challenges to the Jewish commemorative tradition.[36] For the vast majority of its victims there are simply no graves to visit, no places for the erection of individual tombstones, no bodies left to await the longed-for bodily resurrection of classical Jewish messianic thought. Further, the Holocaust took place in modernity, and was perpetrated against religious and secular Jew alike, thereby disallowing the possibility for commemoration solely within traditional and covenantal frameworks. Indeed, in the modern period, Jewish thought and life has been distinguished primarily through its diversity,[37] a heterogeneous reality that even the highly elastic covenantal claims of traditional Jewish thought cannot unite.[38]

What to do with this memory, therefore, has raised both *theological* and *practical* challenges for the Jewish commemorative tradition. The struggles of post-Holocaust theology and the vast array of Holocaust commemoration initiatives embody ongoing confrontations with these respective challenges. Yet these two forms of response are not often considered together, with the former remaining predominantly within the realms of written and systematic tracts, while the latter aims primarily to give voice to the desire for public ritual and remembrance. Indeed, attempting to understand and delineate the points of connection between the two is fraught with difficulties, as the questions that animate the deliberations of post Holocaust theology may stand at odds with – or even threaten to offend – the sensibilities of those involved

in public commemorative initiatives; particularly those individuals and groups distanced from traditional Jewish thought and practice.

For example, the key question facing those who wish to engage with the theological difficulties that the Holocaust presents is this: Does the historical experience of the Holocaust negate the covenantal relationship between Israel and her God and, if not, how can the events of the Holocaust be reconciled within pre-existing notions of covenant? Although not an exact descriptor, the English term that best encapsulates this dilemma is 'theodicy' – a defence of God in light of evil.[39] In traditional Jewish sources, however, the central concern of theodicy is not the omnibenevolent or omnipotent nature of God; that is, how can God be both all-good and all-powerful in light of the existence of evil, but whether the continued relationship between God and the Jewish people – the covenant – is maintained through times of persecution and destruction? For ultra-orthodox thinkers there is no such dilemma, the question being not whether Auschwitz was part of a providential plan but rather, how so? In line with traditional beliefs, therefore, ultra-Orthodox thinkers during and since the Holocaust have relied upon biblical and classical rabbinic theodicies to make theological sense of the Holocaust.[40] Ranging from somewhat mysterious or cryptic formulations such as *Hester Panim* (the hiding or 'turning' of God's face) through to the more straightforward but confronting theodicy of *m'Shoah l'Tkumah* (Shoah/Catastrophe to Rebirth), such responses simply assimilated the Holocaust into a pre-existing and redemptive, providential worldview. As a result, traditional ritual commemorations such as *Tisha B'Av* (Fast of the 9th of Av) were deemed perfectly adequate to commemorate this destruction in much the same manner of destructions past.

However, for more mainstream Jewish thinkers, classical theodicies and their concomitant ritual observances have proved less palatable. The theodicy underpinning the fast of *Tisha B'Av* provides a case in point. The theological worldview of the Book of Lamentations, the chanting of which forms part of the ritual observance of *Tisha B'Av*, rests upon a theodicy of *Mipnei Hatoeinu* (evil exists on account of our sins) – an irreconcilable position for most modern Jewish theologians vis-à-vis the Holocaust. The modern Orthodox Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg powerfully articulates the rejection of this theology:

> To talk of love and of a God who cares in the presence of the burning children is obscene and incredible; to leap in and pull a child out of a pit, to clean its face and heal its body, is to make the most powerful statement – the only statement that counts.[41]

The one and a half million Jewish children murdered during the Holocaust makes a theodicy such as *Mipnei Hatoeinu* untenable to Greenberg; the idea that the suffering of innocents could somehow be the manifestation of divine punishment being an impossibility at best and a moral obscenity at worst. Yet, while the Holocaust has proved for the majority of mainstream Jewish thinkers to be unassimilable in completely traditional terms, a total abandonment of traditional categories has proved equally unworkable. Consequently, prominent Jewish theologians like Greenberg, Eliezer Berkovits, Emil Fackenheim and Richard Rubenstein have attempted to grapple with these theological challenges through either a rejection or a reworking of traditional Jewish theological paradigms.[42]

Zachary Braiterman, in *(God) After Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Thought*, carefully details these instances of continuity and change in post-Holocaust theology by understanding these works as sitting neither within nor without the tradition, but rather as modern manifestations of the diversity of theological response to destruction evident in pre-Holocaust Jewish writing.[43] In so doing, Braiterman allows for what he defines as the 'theodic and anti-theodic' strains in traditional Jewish thought to come under consideration.[44] Challenging the prevailing view that traditional thought was 'unequivocally theodic'[45] (dominated by the concerns of theodicy), Braiterman attempts to show that biblical and rabbinic texts also contained what he labels an 'antitheodic' voice. He describes the content of antitheodicy as:

> … antitheodicy (the religious refusal to 'justify', 'explain', or 'accept' the relationship between God and evil) represents an additional factor that disrupts the dominance of theodicy in religious thought.[46]

In this framework, post-Holocaust theology is not conceived as a break from tradition but rather demonstrates a 'revival' of the once-marginal 'antitheodic subject':

> … once a more or less temporary aberration in the Bible and midrash, this Privileged Antitheodic Subject has now come to represent a species.[47]

While Braiterman's study is useful in delineating the transformation rather than wholesale rejection of tradition evident in post-Holocaust theology, it is restricted to written, systematic tracts by Jewish theologians and philosophers. Hence, the questions of whether and how

theological responses influence, or indeed may be being created de facto in the multitude of Holocaust commemorative initiatives existing outside of traditional theological forums, remain largely unexamined.

Indeed despite, or perhaps due to, these immense theological difficulties, the desire to remember the Holocaust outside of traditional frameworks continues unabated, resulting in the creation of ever more diverse commemorative strategies and related representational forms. Certainly, not all of these initiatives seek to reconcile the events of the Holocaust within the context of theodicy. However, in many commemorative initiatives, sacred and, in particular, redemptive elements remain implicit, even if they are created outside of traditional forums and performed in not exclusively Jewish settings. The absence of scholarly works that address the presence and influence of traditional Jewish tropes in Holocaust representation arguably prevents a comprehensive understanding of Holocaust memory.[48] A broader lens is clearly necessary to understand when and how traditional Jewish paradigms are employed and transformed in a variety of Holocaust representational and commemorative forms both within and beyond the Jewish world. Nowhere are such analyses more pressing than in works pertaining to the creation and content of Holocaust memorials and museums; perhaps the most ubiquitous and influential forums for the creation and propagation of Holocaust memory internationally.

Thou shalt not set up a Pillar

Early discussions within the Jewish world pertaining to the building of Holocaust museums and memorials demonstrate that these developments cannot simply be understood as a 'natural' outgrowth of the Jewish tradition. While the construction of memorials is evidenced very early on in the history of Holocaust commemoration,[49] attempts to erect such structures were met with considerable suspicion in the observant Jewish world. The biblical prohibitions against the erection of 'pillars' and the following of foreign customs, specifically 'You shall not set up a sacred post …' (Deuteronomy 16:22) and 'You shall not follow the practices of the nation I am driving out before you …' (Leviticus 20:23), combined with the traditional Jewish injunction against the production of graven images, provided a strong textual basis against such developments.

Tracing these debates in post-war rabbinical discussions, Rabbi Dr Zimmels investigated the question as to whether these early attempts at building commemorative sites infringed upon the aforementioned

prohibitions. Do such initiatives 'constitute a deviation from the usual practice of our forefathers not to erect monuments?'[50] In 1947 the Ashkenazi and Sephardi Chief Rabbis of Palestine, Isaac Halevy Herzog and Israel Ben Zion Meir Hai Uzziel, were asked by Rabbi Aharon Lastshaver from the Beth Din of Montevideo to proffer their opinions regarding the *halachic* status of his community's intention to erect a monument in the cemetery 'in honour of those martyrs who had been killed during the last war and whose places of rest were unknown'. Both of the Chief Rabbis were opposed to the erection of such a monument, but they did not offer the biblical prohibitions as their reasoning against such measures. Rather, Chief Rabbi Herzog wrote,

> I would say to the members of the holy congregation: Brethren, it would be better if you do not introduce such an innovation. Who of our forefathers was not mindful of the honour of the dead and yet it never occurred to him to erect a monument. Therefore do refrain from doing so; you should rather found a school for children or a large Synagogue. This would be a merit for you and elevate the souls of the martyrs who would intercede for you in the Upper World. However, if you still insist upon your plan then you should erect a *mazebah* (tombstone) at the cemetery where similar stones exist and it should resemble a tombstone. You should try to obtain some ashes of the martyrs and bury the ashes there. … There is still another suggestion better than that of erecting a monument. One should erect at the cemetery an important and tall building like a tower, so that one could enter it, unlike a tombstone, and it should bear an appropriate inscription. In this building prayers for the dead should be recited …[51]

In other places, rabbis stated that the building of a monument was 'tantamount to the erection of a monument customary among non-Jews', basing this objection on the aforementioned Levitical prohibition against the imitation of non-Jewish practices (Leviticus 20:23).[52] This line of reasoning was rejected by other rabbinical authorities on the grounds of a *responsum* of Rabbi Joseph Colon (d. Padua 1480) 'according to which the prohibition of Leviticus 20:23 does not apply to anything done for honour'. At the opposite extreme, other rabbis argued that even ashes must be buried and not kept 'for display'.[53] Consensus was never reached.

Indeed, the ambivalence displayed toward memorial spaces within the observant Jewish world continues. Survivor and scholar Yaffa Eliach

noted this lack of commitment to the building of such institutions within observant communities in her admonition to leaders of the Orthodox kibbutz movement, *Ha-Poel ha-Mizrachi*. The retort of one of the older ideologues to her charge is telling:

> They – the non religious kibbutzim – need museums. We do not. We have a synagogue, the center of our cultural life. They have nothing.[54]

The non-traditional nature of memorial and museum forms places them largely outside of Orthodox observant forms of Holocaust commemoration.[55] Even so, for the majority of these institutions, the very tropes, symbols, narratives and worldview upon which they are built emerge from the Jewish tradition. Despite this derivation, the religious underpinnings of these forms have not been addressed within the observant Jewish world. Meanwhile, the drive to remember was such that the building of memorials and museums continued unabated, albeit outside of traditionally Jewish domains.

So dominant are these institutions as expressions of Holocaust representation and commemoration that various historiographies of the form and its development have emerged. For all this attention, however, the sacred content of these ostensibly secular commemorative forms has remained largely unexplored. Indeed, where discussion of a given site's 'Jewishness' does occur, the content and meaning of this 'Jewish essence' is usually addressed tangentially. The exhibition, *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, curated by James Young and staged at the New York Jewish Museum in 1994, constituted a landmark acknowledgement of the importance of these forms in conveying Holocaust history and memory in an international context. In both the exhibition and the accompanying catalogue, Holocaust memorials are examined for their artistic merits, connection to national memorial traditions and role in modern 'pilgrimages' like Poland tours.[56] Yet, beyond the notion of these tours as somehow 'ritualistic', there is no attempt to understand whether and how museum and memorial forms constitute authentic expressions of the Jewish commemorative tradition and what may happen to these expressions once placed in public space.[57] Hence, while Young's work has been foundational in establishing the great importance of these forms in the overall development of Holocaust representation and memory, the relationship between these sites and traditional forms of Jewish commemoration is yet to be explored in any comprehensive sense.[58]

Similarly, seminal research regarding memorials in perpetrator countries has been undertaken by Harold Marcuse. In his detailed account of both the history and memorialization of Dachau concentration camp, Marcuse does accord space to the nature of its Jewish commemoration.[59] He describes, for example, the religious elements of the Jewish memorial:

> The door handles, in contrast, are olive twigs, signs of God's reconciliation with Noah after the biblical flood. The rough-hewn interior walls of the 9 meter tall interior are adorned by seventy candleholders representing the seventy elders of Moses. A symbolic lectern bearing the Hebrew inscription 'Yiskor' ('commemorate') and a ritual washing basin complete the furnishings.[60]

Given the historical focus of the work, however, the theological underpinnings of the camp's specifically Jewish commemorations are not its central concern. Marcuse's overarching goal in charting these developments is to explicate the growing visibility of Jewish commemoration at the site and its significance within the broader framework of commemoration at Dachau, rather than to delve into the sacred meanings of these traditional symbols and their transformation in the decidedly non-traditional site of the camp. Most recently, in an issue of the *American Historical Review* dedicated to the topic of Holocaust representation, Marcuse contributed an article devoted to Holocaust memorials as constituting their own 'genre', a built expression of both the history of Holocaust and how that history has come to be understood.[61] In his far-reaching survey, he notes the rejection of 'specifically Jewish symbols'[62] in a variety of Holocaust memorials planned (but not realized) for New York in the late 1940s and early 1950s and interprets this rejection as demonstrating a 'lack of support [for memorialization] among Jewish organizations in New York, which were wary of antisemitism during the Cold War period'.[63] While his assessment is entirely plausible, it is also interesting to ask what *was* meaningful in the Jewish content of these memorials for the communities that sought to build them, beyond a fear of antisemitic backlash. What might be instructive about the Jewish content of these sites vis-à-vis the respective communities' understanding of the memory at hand?

More recent attempts have been made to connect these sites to Jewish religious responses that go beyond the biblical command of *Zakhor* (Remember). Oren Baruch Stier's *Committed to Memory* seeks to uncover and chart the presence of post-Holocaust theologies in a variety of

Holocaust memory forms, offering a novel and intriguing review of how post-Holocaust theologies can become 'embodied' in museum displays.[64] Jennifer Hansen Glucklich's *Holocaust Memory Reframed* attempts to bring sociological categories of religious experience into the museum space, providing a fascinating study of how the symbolic and the spatial collide in the memorial museum to imitate more traditional sacred spaces.[65] Both these analyses offer important frameworks for understanding how the exhibition strategies of Holocaust memorial museums imitate and evoke the sacred. Yet neither places these developments within a long-range study of traditional Jewish response to destruction[66] nor do they seek to delineate the impact of these traditional religious tropes on the *development* of the institutions at hand in addition to an analysis of the completed displays. Hence, despite the fact that memorials and museums (and most importantly for this study their fusion in the form of the memorial museum) have become perhaps the most visible and dominant forms of Holocaust representation, the sacred content of the memory they contain and convey is yet to be comprehensively delineated and understood within either traditional or academic forums.

In order to isolate and examine the metahistorical or sacred memory contained in these sites, a working definition of what the sacred can mean in such settings is necessary. While I have thus far defined the terms 'metahistorical' or 'sacred' as predominantly relating to traditional Jewish responses to destruction, it must be acknowledged that defining what is and what is not sacred in the 'secular modern age' is so difficult a task that most attempts to do so descend into what sociologist of religion Daniele Hervieu-Leger describes as a debate about the 'functional':

> For many writers, reference to the sacred merely provides an occasion to rehearse the functional argument by extending it to encompass every sphere of meaning engendered by modern societies. Taken to its extreme, whatever has the slightest association with mystery, or with the search for significance or reference to the transcendent, or with the absolute nature of certain values, is sacred.[67]

Hervieu-Leger rightly points to an abuse of the term that threatens to render it meaningless as a category for critical investigation. The reality that contemporary understandings of the sacred have extended beyond traditional religious institutions, however, means that explorations of the sacred dimensions of Holocaust memory must be pursued through the analysis of non-traditional remembrance forms if we are to come

to a comprehensive understanding of its contours and reach. To aid such efforts, Hervieu-Leger points out that in contemporary societies a clear distinction must be made between the 'immediate experience of the sacred and that of the religious administration of the sacred'.[68] The 'immediate experience' is individual and, therefore, largely indefinable. The 'religious administration' is more often institutional, and in non-traditional and ostensibly secular societies this distinction allows for the 'administration of the sacred' by institutions and frameworks other than those of 'organized religion'. The modern memorial, and in particular the war memorial, provides perhaps the most ubiquitous contemporary example of the 'administration of the sacred' outside of traditional religious institutions.[69] In these spaces, a variety of individual and communal rituals are enacted that, while lacking an explicitly theistic element, do function to mediate the sacred memory of a traumatic past.

However, a similar 'functional' problem is evident with regard to defining what the sacred might entail in these sites. A lack of rigour or 'vagueness' as to the possible meaning of the sacred in these institutions is evident in the existing literature, particularly with respect to war memorials.[70] While influential commentators such as Jay Winter have gone so far as to assert that such spaces are 'the cathedrals of the 21st century',[71] pointing to sacred themes of 'sacrifice, death, mourning, evil, brotherhood, dignity, transcendence',[72] much work remains to ascertain how such subjects are embodied and conveyed in these sites. For if the idea that museums 'imitate behaviour in liturgical settings',[73] has been well established, what exactly such 'rituals' comprise is difficult to ascertain. Indeed, the ineffable quality of 'the sacred' makes for a formidable challenge within the predominantly visually focussed space of the museum and memorial. As Chris Arthur writes regarding the conflicting 'drives' in religious consciousness, the drive toward silence (particularly in depictions of the Divine) and the drive toward communication:

> For if many, if not all, faiths have at their centre a key element which eludes expression, does this not drastically limit any attempt to exhibit religion from the outset? How should museums of, or concerned with, religion approach this tension between words, images, objects and an apparently incommunicable core? When it comes to exhibiting the sacred, a fundamental challenge is, quite simply, how do you picture the unpictureable; how do you mount a display about what, at root, is resistant to all forms of expression; how do you

> convey to visitors that what religions themselves see as of primary importance is something which lies beyond all the carefully assembled material which museums present for their scrutiny.[74]

Arthur's point is well taken. Museums and memorials seek to display 'what is'. The sacred, and in particular the Divine, is more often described by 'what is not'.[75] Where attempts have been made to grapple with the presence of the sacred in museums and memorials, the focus of such analyses is usually concerned with how 'the work of museums and the practice of religions resemble one another in feature and function: gathering and arranging sacred objects, displaying them to amplify their power, divining new meaning through them, and playing on the contrast between appearance and concealment'.[76] The preoccupation of such studies is the ability for museums to 'mimic' more traditional sacred spaces while simultaneously removing the sacred object from the context that more often than not imbues it with sacred meaning in the first place. Such decontextualization underpins the dangerous aspects of appropriating *sacra* within the secular space of the modern museum. The words of W. Richard West Jr, former Director of the National Museum of the American Indian, provide a case in point:

> In representing the material, however, it is not sufficient, in the end, to treat it only as 'art', because we miss much in doing so. A person can stand in awe, for example, of a pot created by Popovi Da, the brilliant Pueblo ceramicist, for its beauty as 'art', but if he does not know the linkage between Popovi Da's worldview and community and his personal creative spirit, the meaning of the pot to Popovi Da and the people of San Ildefenso is incomplete – and it can be made complete only by honouring the place of that nexus in defining the meaning of the object.[77]

While such concerns are entirely understandable, they negate the possibility for a thoroughgoing examination of the sacred in museum space as they focus on *ameliorating* the transformation of the sacred, rather than in revealing its *continuation and transformation* in non-traditional contexts. In studies concerning the presence and display of the sacred in museum and memorial contexts, therefore, either the functional ability of museum and memorial space to 'mimic' traditional sacred spaces is emphasized while the sacred content remains unexamined, or, alternately, the sacred content is acknowledged but is deemed largely 'incomplete' in the secular space of the museum. Yet surely there

is a third possibility – that the practice of museum display not only allows for the incorporation of the sacred into this domain but just as surely contributes to its transformation – evoking an object's sacred character and meaning while developing and changing this meaning at the same time.

Given the overwhelmingly iconoclastic concerns of Judaism, such a transformation is to be found less with regard to objects (although cases where this does occur will be examined) than through the concerns of sacred narrative – the text comprising the holiest of Jewish 'sites'. Indeed, it is precisely due to their narrative bent that Holocaust memorial museums provide a rich opportunity not only to demarcate 'the sacred' in these spaces but also to track its transformation. For while Holocaust memorial museums cannot be understood to replace or even serve to replicate synagogues or cemeteries, they can be considered as forms of 'administration of the sacred' that exist outside of traditional structures. Emerging out of deeply felt need rather than theological deliberations, these spaces often run ahead of systematic Jewish thought and provide an important, but as yet underexplored framework through which to delineate and explore a variety of attempts to reckon with the theological challenges the Holocaust presents. As such, they provide an opportunity to demarcate precisely 'what' might be considered sacred in the 'secular space' of the museum, and track how these sacred meanings are changing our understanding of the Holocaust. In order to uncover the presence and track the transformation of these tropes in Holocaust memorial museums, the development of a working and rigorous definition of the 'sacred' that goes beyond the 'functional' is essential.

The Symbiosis of History and Metahistory

Mircea Eliade posited that in ancient religions every ritual could be traced back to a divine model or act.[78] Further, he noted that 'not only do rituals have their mythical model but any human act whatever acquires effectiveness to the extent to which it exactly *repeats* an act performed at the beginning of time by a god, a hero, or an ancestor'.[79] More than a simple atavism, this affirmation of transcendent reality as the only 'true' reality reveals a sensibility that rejects the intrinsic value of the external world. Within such a worldview, 'objects and acts acquire a value, and in so doing become real, because they participate, after one fashion or another, in a reality that transcends them'.[80] Objects and acts are imbued with meaning in a ritualized and mythic context. Through ritual, ordinary time is suspended and collapsed as the worshipper 'participates in

mythical time'.[81] From such a perspective, mythical time[82] is the only 'real' time – the time in which primordial beginnings and formative events are actualized in the present.[83] If mythical time is 'malleable' in the sense that it is possible to return to primordial beginnings, it follows that in so doing one can also potentially be 'freed' from the 'burden' of historical time. As Eliade noted, such a perspective of time has its salutary advantages over more modern conceptions as the latter's 'justification of a historical event by the simple fact that it is a historical event, in other words, by the simple fact that it "happened that way"', will not go far toward freeing humanity from the terror the event inspires.[84]

This cyclical view of time sits in apparent opposition to linear, 'historical', understandings of chronology more commonly associated with modernity. Dan Stone provides a compelling description of the understanding of time that emerged in the modern period:

> Modernity is the age … in which the distinction between past and present developed, so that, aided by the process of secularisation, the experience of time began to seem like an infinite continuum, at each moment of which what had gone before became irrevocable. Modernity is marked by two competing experiences of time: acceleration and loss.[85]

Not only is 'return' an impossibility within such understandings of history or historical time[86] but, further, within the context of modern, critical historiography, the 'burden of history' and the subsequent suffering of humanity is not considered from the perspective of ultimate purposes nor is it attributed metahistorical import. Critical historical studies may seek to ascertain cause and effect with regard to cases of historical suffering such as the Holocaust, but the idea of attributing metahistorical meaning to such suffering is beyond the scope or intent of the modern historical enterprise.[87] Historical consideration may thus provide a deeper understanding of a traumatic past but it cannot hope to provide a release from the burden of that history. By contrast, in the ancient frameworks evoked by Eliade, renewed meaning was attributed to traumatic events through the framework of 'mythical time'. By participating in mythical time the individual and the community returned to foundational events in an attempt to experience a release from current realities and 'begin anew'.

While Eliade has perhaps been rightly criticized for his 'far-reaching conclusions' with respect to the efficacy mythical time to secure release from the 'terror of history',[88] it is his identification of what might be

termed the 'mythical impulse' existent in many traditional societies – the impulse to free oneself and one's community from this terror – that is of interest. Arguably, this impulse finds its continuation in modified forms in both Jewish and Christian religious traditions in the theological categories of repentance, renewal and rebirth. Instances of such theologies and their related rituals are too numerous to note or discuss in great detail in the present study but some well-known examples in the Jewish tradition include the *Yamim Noraim* (High Holy Days) and the weekly celebration of the Shabbat. Both festivals seek a return to primordial beginnings albeit with differing purposes: the former functions primarily as a means for expiation, and the latter as a weekly affirmation of the theological categories of creation and covenant. However, a distinction must be made between the idea of 'return' in these rituals and Eliade's definition of 'eternal return'. For within the Jewish tradition notions of 'mythical' time are further complicated by understandings of 'historical' time.

The emphasis on historical time in the Jewish tradition begins within the Bible itself. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to simply equate biblical and modern notions of history. Critical scholars of the Bible have long been aware of the different goals and literary techniques of the biblical authors as opposed to those of modern historians.

> One of the greatest contributions of classical source criticism is highlighting the diversity of opinions, ideologies, or outlooks that have been preserved side by side within the Torah. … a modern historian would likely have decided between these alternate versions, would have 'inquired' into the better source and would have reconciled the differences. But the redactor of the Torah was no historian in our sense of the word; he almost seemed to delight in including contradictory accounts.[89]

Further, an overarching aim of the biblical writers was to understand and chart history within pre-existing metahistorical frameworks. For the writers of the Bible, historical events pointed to transcendent realities and their causes were attributed accordingly. Consequently, dominating the biblical drama are the acts of the 'God of History'; a redeeming God who acts to bring His people out from bondage in Egypt, a relational God with whom the Israelites and their descendants enter into a covenant at Sinai, and a providential God that promises an eventual end to history itself as the culmination of His creation. That the Israelite God participates in history is axiomatic to the biblical worldview.

While the Bible cannot, therefore, be considered historical in the same sense as modern critical histories, 'the biblical record is sufficiently historical to serve the modern scholar as a constant point of departure and reference for his researches'.[90] Further, as Yosef Haim Yerushalmi notes, the emphasis on the historical found throughout the Bible, also has the effect of 'closing' time.[91]

> Not history, as is commonly supposed, but only mythic time repeats itself. If history is real, then the Red Sea can be crossed only once, and Israel cannot stand twice at Sinai.[92]

Yet, in what might be described as a *symbiotic* relationship, the metahistorical is not completely eliminated in the Bible in preference for the historical-experiential. Rather, these elements are fused as the foundational myths of the Israelite nation become a template for understanding and interpreting history. In times of destruction or national catastrophe, the utility of this template becomes even more pronounced as meaning is attributed to historical calamities through the prism of older, metahistorical paradigms. As the biblical scholar Jon D. Levenson surmises with regard to the application of the creation myth to later instances of historical tragedy within the Bible:

> The old myth is applied to historical events in the manner of a dialectical counterstatement. The exhilarating reminiscence of YHWH's primordial victory is set directly against the bitter defeat of those with whom he has announced a unique relationship. … the myth continues to provide the language of transcendence that the great act of deliverance demands and deserves. Yet the invocation of the myth can only underscore the absence of that act of deliverance.[93]

The 'myth' or metahistorical template Levenson points to can also be understood as a form of theodicy. In Levenson's formulation, biblical theodicy is less a classical, philosophical justification of evil in light of the God's benevolence and omnipotence than a plea to God to restore His people, *ke kedem*, to the days of old, the days of the victorious acts of the God of Creation, and in so doing to literally 'blast' the current experience of evil away.[94] Importantly, such theodic frameworks allowed for a continued covenant between Israel and her God throughout the biblical text – despite seemingly damning historical evidence to the contrary. Hence, within this understanding of theodicy, it is never the contemporary situation that determines whether God

remains in covenant with Israel, rather it is the experience of God's action in the past and therefore the possibility (but not the guarantee) of God's action in the present that animates the biblical promise and maintains it throughout times of individual, communal and national tragedy. Through the prism of biblical theodicy each new destruction is endowed with covenantal, and hence eternal, meaning and purpose.

Within Jewish thought, it is possible to trace a continuation of these metahistorical templates and theodicies into the rabbinic period, albeit in modified forms. As clearly evidenced in rabbinic *midrash*, the classical rabbis display an almost total disregard for the conventions of chronology.[95] However, while much has been made of the rabbinical tendency to privilege memory over history,[96] this inclination does not extend into the same 'collapse' of time evidenced in Eliade's mythical worldview. For example, the rabbinic injunction punctuating the liturgy of the Passover *seder* (ritual meal) compels the adherent to remember the Exodus 'as if he had come out of Egypt'. The imperative is extended through what might be labelled 'experiential ritual', allowing the participant to engage with events understood as historical (such as the Exodus) but no longer bringing those events 'into contemporary time' in the mythical sense of Eliade's 'archaic man'.[97] The sensibility of the classical rabbis, like the writers of the Bible, is still 'sufficiently historical' to make such a return to history untenable.[98] Rather, the foundational mythic events provide the ancient rabbis with 'all the history they required'[99] to probe the historical experience of the People of Israel and discern its metahistorical meaning.

Nowhere is this framework more apparent than in the rabbinical writings regarding the destruction of the Second Temple, or *Hurban*. The rabbis reformulate both the destruction and the disastrous wars that follow – culminating in the failed *Bar Kokhba* revolt against Rome (132–135 CE) – within a pre-existing and eternal covenantal framework. Hence where Josephus saw a victorious Roman army and a decimated Judean population,[100] the rabbis envisioned a continuing covenantal community – a community with an even greater responsibility to remain faithful to that covenant – even unto death. The well-known Talmudic description of the martyrdom of Rabbi Akiva provides a case in point:

> It was related that when Rabbi Akiva was taken out for execution, it was the hour of the *shema* prayer, and while they combed his flesh with iron combs he directed his mind to accepting upon himself the kingship of heaven with love. His disciples said to him: 'Our teacher,

> even to this point?'. He said to them: 'All my days I have been troubled by the verse (from the *shema*), *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul,'* [which I interpret,] 'even if he takes thy soul.' Now that I have the opportunity shall I not fulfil it?[101]

Upon first reading, it is not clear how this version of events contains a metahistorical dimension. The identification of the specific prayer recited at the point of martyrdom provides the link. The *shema*, a confession of faith proclaimed three times daily by observant Jews, is understood in the rabbinic worldview as a daily reaffirmation of covenant,[102] a liturgical recollection of Sinai. As such, Akiva's recounting of this prayer can be read as a reconfirmation of the continuing efficacy of the foundational covenantal event. Within this framework, events that to the eye of an historian seem at best martyrdom and at worst catastrophic defeat are transformed into an unprecedented opportunity to affirm the ongoing and eternal nature of the covenant.

The recasting of temporal historical events through eternal covenantal paradigms is the dominant modus operandi of the traditional Jewish responses to destruction examined throughout this book. Such metahistorical interpretations of history take as their point of departure therefore not the historical event per se but rather the *meaning* of a given historical event within the context of a pre-existing theological framework. In other words, it is a pre-existing theological premise or sacred archetype that drives and ultimately shapes a metahistorical interpretation of history. Indeed, Jewish sacred texts afford meaning to Jewish history within the covenantal mission and purpose of the People Israel; they do not attempt to explain this history within a 'cause and effect' framework reminiscent of modern historical studies. As Levenson notes with regard to the mysterious origins of monotheism in ancient Israelite religion:

> The historical experience of Israel could have been explained within the mechanism of a thorough-going polytheism. The Exodus, for example, could have been presented in terms of a theomachy, a war among the gods, in which one side freed the other's slaves.[103]

Certainly, this could have been so. The Exodus could have been described as a result of any manner of supernatural confrontations culminating in the miraculous freeing of the Israelites from bondage. However, the biblical authors were concerned with establishing the ancient Israelites' exclusive fidelity to their Lord, and thus their depiction

of the Exodus event was by necessity one that stressed the strength of the God of Israel and His commitment to the salvation of the Hebrews, evidenced in His rescue of them from servitude in Egypt. In its biblical formulation, it is not the historicity of the Exodus narrative that is at stake, but rather its import as a majestic vindication of the covenantal claims of the People Israel.

Thus, the symbiosis of history and metahistory in the Jewish tradition is perhaps at its most pronounced and most profound within the concerns of theodicy. For while the theodicies of biblical and rabbinic Judaism do not attempt to recall in the manner of Eliade's 'eternal return', they do seek to imbue the 'burden of history' with metahistorical meaning. Within this framework, a majestic past provides assurance of a redeemed future and in so doing maintains a covenantal present. Complete return is constrained by the realities of human experience, yet the mythic impulse remains in the very human desire to confront and contain the chaos of history, tame its seeming randomness and give meaning to its abject cruelty – in other words, to impose 'order upon chaos'. The question remains, however, as to whether Jewish history and memory in the modern period has entirely shed its traditional garb. Or have these classical theodicies been retained beyond the traditional domains of text and ritual, theology and synagogue?

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, in his classic study *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, reminds us that the command to 'remember' has long been central to Jewish thought and practice. The origins of the Jewish engagement with memory are biblical: 'Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people'.[104] Yerushalmi contends that the Jewish passion for recording Jewish history is a relatively recent affair, intimately linked to the rise of history as a modern, 'scientific' discipline. He suggests that Jews are traditionally a people concerned with *memory* – which he understands to encompass the various meanings that Jews have ascribed to their historical experiences. Distinguished from history by purpose and selectivity, Jewish memory bestows meaning upon the past and is recounted through text and ritual to give purpose to the present.[105] In Yerushalmi's definition, therefore, Jewish memory is largely 'mythic' in nature and scope, and stands in opposition to modern Jewish history, which in its rejection of cyclical time, is situated outside of traditional forms of Jewish memory and its associated commemorative forms.

Yerushalmi's understanding of pre-modern Jewish 'memory' as antithetical to modern forms of Jewish 'history' is countered in the work of Amos Funkenstein. Challenging Yerushalmi's depiction of the work

of nineteenth-century Jewish historians as divorced from pre-modern notions of Jewish 'collective memory', Funkenstein seeks to establish a mediating category that he labels 'historical consciousness' – a 'creative thinking about history' couched in the claim that 'Jewish culture never took itself for granted'.[106] In other words, Funkenstein rejects the idea that pre-modern forms of Jewish memory 'collapse' historical time into entirely mythical tropes. As such, he argues that even pre-modern Jewish 'collective memory' was historically contingent, despite its proclivity to view the Jewish past with an eye toward its meaning in the present. For Funkenstein, 'historical consciousness' was forged in the intersection of the historical and metahistorical in ancient Israelite culture and is therefore 'a reminder of the past in order to forge a collective identity and to maintain it' as well as an 'attempt to understand the past, to question its meaning'.[107] This meaning for the ancient Israelites was evidenced in the work of Providence, the active and mysterious engagement of their God in history.

Funkenstein's category of historical consciousness not only serves to endow pre-modern conceptions of Jewish 'memory' with 'history', but also finds 'memory' embedded in modern attempts to write Jewish 'history'. Funkenstein takes issue with Yerushalmi's wholesale characterization of the enterprise of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism), as a form of Jewish activity entirely separated from collective memory, positing that the varieties of Jewish historical effort in the nineteenth century were indeed linked to contemporary perceptions of the *meaning* of that history in the present. For example, Funkenstein contends that both the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the modern Reform movement attempted to recast traditional Judaism as a 'liberal-bourgeois ideology open to its environment and to change'.[108] Given this common preoccupation, the pre-modern claim of Jewish 'uniqueness' based on difference is not lost in either 'historiography' (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) or 'collective memory' (Reform Judaism), but rather reformulated by both to a more palatable definition where 'the uniqueness of Israel came to mean its *universality*'.[109]

For the purposes of this study, the work of both historians is instructive. Yerushalmi's uncovering of the principally selective and purposeful dynamics of pre-modern Jewish memory forms the basic definition of the term used throughout this study. However, this definition is tempered throughout by Funkenstein's observation that this memory is not altogether lost in the modern period but rather modified due to the 'historical' preoccupations distinctive of modernity. Given this theoretical backdrop, the modern forms of Jewish history and memory

examined throughout this study are understood as an adaptation, rather than a rejection, of the paradigms through which traditional Judaism imagined and connected to its past. In such a conceptual model, the historical concerns of pre-modern Jewish civilization are not characterized as exclusively teleological, but neither are modern conceptions of Jewish history and memory understood to be free of such influences.[110] Thus, while modern forms of Jewish history and memory might ostensibly absent a Providential or explicitly theistic element, they may still display similar preoccupations in an implicit, non-theistic, mode. This more nuanced conception of modern Jewish history and memory as exhibiting both historical and metahistorical elements, indeed providing a symbiosis of the two, allows us to define and trace the sacred aspects of Holocaust memory as embodied in the memorial museum form.

The Holocaust Memorial Museum: Sacred Secular Space

While it is a truism that Holocaust memorial museums fulfil a very real need to mourn and remember the victims, it is arguable that they also realize a deeper sacred obligation. The very structure of *memorial museums* is reminiscent of the symbiosis of history and metahistory that underpins traditional and modern Jewish forms of history and memory. In physical imitation of this symbiotic relationship, history is displayed in the museum but *meaning* is created in the 'metahistorical space' of the memorial. Of course, overlap can and will happen – such is the nature of integrated exhibition and memorial space and especially if the *entire* site is in some way classified as a memorial – which is the case for each of the institutions examined in this study. However, the central point is that while the modern discomfort with 'myth' is allayed by the rational, 'historical' space of the museum, the very human need for meaning is expressed through the memorial context. Thus, in its very structure and purpose – to display the history and perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust – the memorial museum affords the possibility of sublimating an explicitly theistic element while retaining Eliade's 'mythical impulse'.[111] Integrated almost seamlessly into a single structure, the memorial museum provides a space in which both the history and metahistory of the Holocaust – its secular history and sacred memory – can be developed and conveyed.

This symbiosis is achieved through the co-option and transformation of traditional Jewish symbols, rituals, archetypes and, most importantly,

narratives. Indeed, it is the contention of this study that it is primarily in the ability of memorial museums to imbue the Holocaust narratives contained within them with metahistorical meaning that this symbiosis is to be found. Such a perspective runs counter to the conventional view of museums as primarily containers of material culture, repositories for objects that relay the physical evidence of a given topic, time, people or place. In these museums, the usual practice is for the curator to retrieve the story from the object, rather than the other way around. In most contemporary history museums, however, the direction is reversed and it is the narrative exposition of the display that dictates the choice of objects. As the order of extracting and ascribing meaning from and to the objects is inverted, the object does not tell its own story (or stories); rather, it becomes subject to and acts to support the overarching story-line of the exhibition. A narrative approach therefore significantly alters the traditional emphasis of a historical museum from the collection and display of primary sources, to the *utilization* of these sources to tell a particular narrative of events.[112]

Holocaust memorial museums were not the first to consciously utilize this approach. For example, the USHMM was modelled on Tel Aviv's Beth Hatefutsoth (The Nahum Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora). Beth Hatefutsoth was the first history museum to base itself in a predominantly narrative historical approach.[113] It opened in 1978 and was greeted with some suspicion in the museum world due to its lack of an original collection. In point of fact, the original permanent exhibition uses no original artifacts at all, preferring a 'hands-on' approach to engage and stimulate the viewer by offering a coherent narrative of 2,000 years of Jewish dispersion through the use of dioramas, reproductions and interactive exhibits. One purpose of a narrative exhibition approach is to add a didactic element to the museum experience – the exhibition 'instructs' the visitor and the visitor is expected to both subjectively identify and objectively 'learn' from immersion in the narrative arc. The goal is to retain the visitor's objectivity as an intellectual 'outsider' while simultaneously engaging the visitor as an 'insider' emotionally. One might characterize this method as not merely providing the visitor with information about a particular historical event or era but also establishing the visitor's *relationship* to that event. In such a museum, the process of identification is part of the process of education. Thus, the very choice of a narrative approach to exhibition development underscores a desire for the visitor not only to engage with the history on display but also to apprehend its meaning on a deeper, experiential level.

This narrative approach also has much in common with elements of the classical Jewish literary corpus. The use of narrative in the Jewish tradition is as old as the tradition itself. These narratives – 'historical' or otherwise – present more than a 'cause and effect' account of a particular episode. Rather, they offer an interpretation of events that reveals a deeper understanding of the relationship between YHWH[114] and Israel, an exploration of what might be labelled 'providential design'. An example of such a narrative is found in the Joseph cycle at the conclusion of the book of Genesis. Comprising the longest single narrative in the Pentateuch, the story is ostensibly a 'myth of origins', an account of how the Children of Israel come to reside in Egypt, the eventual setting for the Exodus, and as such constitutes the beginning of the revelatory journey toward Sinai.

The culmination of the Joseph story illustrates its providential as well as 'historical' or descriptive content and is therefore instructive regarding the theological function of narrative in the Hebrew Bible.[115] At the conclusion of the narrative, Joseph's brothers, fearing he would exact his revenge after the death of their father Jacob, fling themselves at his feet and plead for forgiveness. Joseph responds: 'Have no fear. Am I a substitute for God? Besides, although you intended me harm, God intended it for good, so as to bring about the present result – the survival of many people' (Genesis 50:20). Thus a story of sibling rivalry and bitter dispute is recast as a necessary, if unsavoury, part of a providential plan that ensures the continuity of the Children of Israel as well as the people of Egypt, whom Joseph has saved from certain death during the famine. As Joseph reflects on his journey and finds in it God's hand, metahistorical meaning is bestowed upon what might otherwise be simply a series of related, but certainly not pre-ordained, events. What the Joseph example serves to illustrate is the propensity inherent in narratives to imbue history with a metahistorical meaning that is not necessarily suggested by a mere recounting of events. Similarly, the narrative proclivity of the three museums under consideration, combined with their memorial thrust, allows a variety of traditional, sacred meanings to be ascribed to Holocaust memory. Moreover, these sacred meanings would likely prove unpalatable to most of the either largely secular or non-traditional Jews that frequent these institutions.

This discomfort is found particularly in the 'redemptive propensity' of traditional sacred narratives. The reluctance to utilize any form of redemptive framework with regard to Holocaust representation is epitomized in the work of two of the most influential commentators in the field, Lawrence Langer and James Young. Both scholars have made landmark contributions to the topic, with Langer concentrating primarily

on the role of testimony and Young making his seminal contribution in his 'readings' of Holocaust memorials.[116] For Langer and Young, employing a redemptive aesthetic in Holocaust representation endangers our ability to confront the full atrocity of the Holocaust, by serving to mask its unmitigated horror in the soothing balm of 'ultimate ends'. Given the current proliferation of 'trivializing' forms of Holocaust representation, their warnings are well made. Encapsulating both scholars' central concerns, Langer describes the dangers of applying an unmediated redemptive framework to a history of atrocity:

> The ghastly details of the Holocaust are a constant reminder of the abyss separating the lived experience of those who endured it from the language that seeks to describe it. To ignore this menacing chasm by bridging it with a brittle rhetoric of consolation only increases the risk of plunging into the uncertainty churning in its depths.[117]

In a similar vein, Young states, 'memory-work about the Holocaust cannot, must not, be redemptive in any fashion'.[118] Salutary as such warnings are for scholars and artists, it is arguable that a redemptive framework is not necessarily one that 'closes' or seeks to 'console' the 'ghastly details' of the Holocaust. Returning to our biblical example, upon first reading of the Joseph story one might characterize the redemptive theodicy of providential design (upon which the narrative rests) as shallow consolation by recourse to the guiding hand of God. A more considered reading reveals a less comforting position. Joseph does not recast his brothers' actions as anything less than 'evil', for while his instruction to them to 'have no fear' may absolve the brothers from the earthly justice their deeds undoubtedly deserve, it does not imply that justice will not be forthcoming. Rather, it constitutes an admission that this justice is unlikely to be administered by human hand, a recognition that God, rather than Joseph, is the final arbiter. 'Am I a substitute for God?' is not an attempt at absolution, therefore, but rather an affirmation that justice does exist, even if its exact details cannot, at this moment, be grasped.

Read from this perspective, the 'guiding hand of God' does not assure clarity. In fact, as is often the case within the Hebrew Bible, providential design raises more questions than it answers. For example, in what is often characterized (somewhat misleadingly) as the most 'anti-redemptive' tale of the Hebrew Bible – the Book of Job – providential design provides no assurance of comfort or even consolation. Job, who is left grasping for meaning after his terrible and terrifying ordeals, *is*

dealt a *providential and redemptive* response, but it is not a reassuring one. For while Job is reminded that he is not privy to the mystery of human suffering, neither is he free to desist in his search for meaning in the face of despair. Rather, he is exhorted by Divine pronouncement to consider how very limited and partial his understanding is – not a heartening proposition from any perspective:

> Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?
> Speak if you have understanding.
> Do you know who fixed its dimensions
> Or measured it with a line?
> Onto what were its bases sunk?
> Who set its cornerstone
> When the morning stars sang together
> And all the divine beings shouted for joy?
>
> (Job 38:4–8)

What *is* assured in the Divine rebuke is that meaning and order do exist (the earth's foundations), that God's 'plan' is there although it may only be partially gleaned. What is compelling about the Jobian narrative is its insistence on both the terrible incomprehensibility of human suffering and the unrelenting human desire to make sense of these experiences within the limited realm of human inquiry. So, too, the redemptive narratives underlying the expositions of Holocaust history in the institutions under consideration should not be dismissed as trite or simplistic attempts to 'explain away' the horror of that history. Neither does this study suggest that they are attempts to 'justify' the events of the Holocaust through a hidden desire for, or belief in, divine retribution. Rather, the redemptive underpinnings of each of the following case studies reveals a fierce commitment to forging a meaningful understanding of the Holocaust with full cognition of its awesome challenge. In these examples, redemption denotes not a banal attempt at closure but rather a considered and unending search for meaning.

Given these considerations, it is small wonder that despite (or perhaps due to) their seemingly secular façades, these institutions have become important sites of commemoration. An indication of the quasi-liturgical role that museums and memorials have come to play can be discerned in the following statement.

> *Yom Ha-Shoah* commemorations have become a fixture on the yearly calendars of Jews both in the Diaspora and in Israel, surpassing in

> level of observance *Tisha be-Av* and other traditional fast days. So too, visits to Holocaust museums convey to many Jews the sense of discharging a difficult but important obligation, as in fulfilling a religious commandment or even making a pilgrimage.[119]

In these sites, visitors attend commemorations in which traditional Jewish prayers are recited (sometimes in modified form), rituals such as the 'Reading of Names' are enacted and commemorative installations like plaques or even symbolic *matzevot* (gravestones) are created. With the exception of the *kaddish* and *el ma-ale rachamim* (mourning prayers), these rituals are rarely explicitly theistic. While the Holocaust memorial museum does not constitute either a synagogue or cemetery, it is evident that there is increasing use of these sites for ritualized commemoration – places where meaning is sought. Further, not only Jews seek this meaning. For while these commemorations tend to begin within the theological and liturgical tropes of the Jewish tradition, more often than not they end without. The burial of ashes and even human remains at numerous Holocaust memorial sites provides a case in point; are these rituals attempts to fulfil the Jewish burial mitzvah of *khesed shel emeth* (loving kindness/respect for the dead) or do they more closely resemble the long-standing Christian practice of the 'incorporation of relics'?[120] Once rituals such as these are placed in the public space of the memorial museum the interplay of context and reception necessarily transforms their sacred meaning.

An examination of this transformation comprises the final section of the case studies that follow. The situating of Holocaust memorial museums at the intersection between the Jewish and non-Jewish world, by default, creates a version of Jewish history and memory that is inextricably linked to surrounding, non-Jewish cultures. All the more so as the creators and funders of Holocaust museums and memorials are by no means exclusively Jewish and even those institutions that are run largely within the Jewish community are characterized by a heterogeneity of Jewish thought and practice. As David Roskies identified in his consideration of the reception of Holocaust literature into the broader, public domain:

> In this fluid environment, Gentiles are free to impose their own understanding on the course of Jewish events as Jews are free to borrow unabashedly from the fund of universal symbols. And this fluidity, in turn, gives rise to no small measure of confusion. As catastrophe, once the most private of Jewish concerns, becomes part of

> the public domain, external perceptions replace inner realities, and borrowed words and archetypes are enlisted to explain the meaning of destruction not only to Gentiles but even to Jews.[121]

The challenges Roskies refers to embody a tension between the 'particular' and the 'universal' in Jewish thought and are not exclusive to the demands of Holocaust representation. In other words, what is exclusively 'Jewish' about Jewish history and memory and when and how does Jewish identity enter into relationship with surrounding and frequently dominant cultures?

This particular/universal paradigm is evident throughout Jewish thought and literature. Certainly, much of the Hebrew Bible insists that the experience of Israel is tied to that of her neighbours. Perhaps the clearest expression of this recurring theme in the tradition is contained in the understanding that the God of Israel and the God of Humanity are one and the same:

> To Me, O Israelites, you are just like the Ethiopians,
> declares the Lord.
> True, I brought Israel up from the land of Egypt
> but also the Philistines from Caphtor
> and the Arameans from Kir. (Amos 9:7)

Similarly, with regard to remembrance, the Israelites are exhorted to remember their history, but this remembrance is not an exclusively internal affair. For example, on *Pesach* Jews commanded to remember the experience of Egypt and the Exodus in order to both understand their formation as a nation, but as a normative command to ethical action.

> You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 23:9)

The verse locates the relevance of Jewish history in the actions that emanate from it. The Hebrew word *Zachor* (remember) contains within it elements of both memory and action. As Harold Bloom reminds us, '*Zachor,* has a much wider range than 'remember' has in English, since in Hebrew to remember is also to act'.[122] These actions pertain to the Israelites, yet their effects are felt well beyond the Israelite community. In the verse's formulation, the events of the Exodus contain both particular and universal resonance. It is little wonder, therefore, that the

ethical imperatives that stem from ritual remembrance of the Exodus narrative have held great meaning for a variety of Jewish and non-Jewish communities both historically and in the present.[123]

For all that, the particular and the universal are usually presented as competing categories although, as Yosef Yerushalmi notes, this separation is not intrinsic to the Jewish tradition. He aims to 'lay to rest the false and insidious dichotomy between the 'parochial' and the 'universal', that canard of the Enlightenment which became and remains a major neurosis of modern Jewish intellectuals'.[124] Yerushalmi points to the heuristic capability of the particular/universal dialectic as an authentic and enduring aspect of the Jewish tradition. Such a framework allows for a broad, yet distinctive understanding of Jewish history and memory; one that does not seek to dilute (or universalize) Jewish experience and also resists the impulse to 'hermetically seal' (or particularize) it to the point that it loses any relationship or relevancy to surrounding, non-Jewish cultures. Jewish history and memory understood within the particular/universal dialectic is concerned with 'the relation of Jews to their own past',[125] but equally allows for the possibility of both retaining and transforming Jewish memory as it enters the non-Jewish world.

Perhaps the relationship between the particular and the universal finds its fullest expression when applied to Holocaust history and memory. For example, recent scholarship linking the memory of the Holocaust to the emergence of a global 'human rights culture' characterizes Holocaust memory as a form of 'cosmopolitan memory.'[126] Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider argue that, 'the shared memories of the Holocaust … a formative event of the twentieth century, provide the foundations for a new cosmopolitan memory, a memory transcending ethnic and national boundaries.'[127] In this formulation, the genocide of European Jewry has been transformed from a historical event contingent upon discrete social, political and historical factors, to a necessary (albeit tragic) means to a 'greater good'. Here the particular is also the universal. Not only is the extermination of European Jewry characterized as a historical event that resonates beyond its time, but it is also understood to exhort an 'ethical imperative' similar to that of Exodus 23:9 – to ameliorate or avoid further sufferings of its kind to anyone, anywhere – through the universalistic framework of human rights discourse.

In this formulation, the Holocaust is bestowed with metahistorical significance in much the same manner as the biblical account of the Exodus. Just as the biblical author casts YHWH as the hero in the

salvation of the Israelites from Egypt, in Levy and Sznaider's account the suffering of European Jewry is cast as the 'secular saviour' for all humanity. In both, one might say that history has been *redeemed*. The difference, of course, being the conduit to redemption – in the first it is the mastery of YHWH, in the second it is the suffering of the Jews. Yet as with the Exodus, reading the Holocaust as the progenitor of a secular and universal salvation is not the only story that could have been told. Just as surely as the Exodus myth could have been understood as the result of a theomachy (war among the gods), so too can the story of the Holocaust be conceptualized in a variety of metahistorical paradigms – with its accompanying ethical imperatives also drawing upon a vast range of possibilities. This flexibility is reflected in the memorial museums under consideration where one may choose to display a universalistic vision of the Holocaust while another might remain particularistic in focus. In each instance, what remains consistent is that the historical event itself is indeed 'mute' – it is the metahistorical interpretation that dictates the Holocaust's ultimate meaning and the purposes to which it will be put.

In each of the following case studies, a dominant metahistorical narrative or archetype is uncovered, forging a 'built theodicy' that affords a sacred and redemptive meaning to the Holocaust memory on display. How each institution chooses to utilize this redemptive memory is then traced through its transformation in the public sphere. For while the particular and the universal are abstract notions, the actions that emanate from the application of these theoretical frameworks are very real indeed. What meaning can and should this suffering hold for those not directly related to it? Does this 'particular' memory have universal significance or is it so particularistic as to be exclusive? How this story is told – and exactly where on the 'universal/particular' continuum it is placed – will ultimately dictate our understanding of what the Holocaust was and for whom its message will resonate. In uncovering the sacred narratives of the secular museum what becomes evident is that contrary to commonly held assumptions, in these spaces the Holocaust has been transformed through a variety of metahistorical frameworks into a sacred and redemptive event. Yet the central question remains: redemption for whom?

2
Negative Epiphany: From Sinai to Washington

> … if there is to be a positive narrative it is what we do with the Event,
> not the Event itself.
> (Michael Berenbaum, Interview, 3 May 2009)

Introduction

Upon entering the permanent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington DC, one is transported from the celebrated icons of American democracy to their antithesis. Exiting the elevators that lift the individual out of the present and into past, the visitor is confronted by the horrors of fascism, reflected in the now-infamous life-sized photographic images and film footage[1] of the liberation of Nazi concentration camps by the American army. Due to the proliferation and familiarity of Holocaust imagery in the present, it is difficult to recall the profound effect of these images when originally released.[2] 'Writers have tried to describe these things but words cannot describe them and, even if they could, there are details too filthy to be printed anywhere', opined the *New York Times Magazine* on 6 May1945, articulating a trope of incomprehensibility vis-à-vis representing the Holocaust that would echo for decades to come.[3] The shock was such that for many, including most famously Susan Sontag, the photographs became indicative of a turning point in the history of the West, an indication that a 'limit had been reached' and a 'prototypically modern revelation: a negative epiphany', experienced.[4] An inverse 'salvation history' was created and a new epoch proclaimed. But what, exactly, was the content of this revelation? Who would make known its message and from where would the word go out? Such were the questions

that, I argue, preoccupied those individuals charged with the development and building of what was to become the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).

The political implications of the choice of these images to begin the USHMM's permanent exhibition have been broadly acknowledged and explored.[5] The juxtaposition of the promise of democracy as epitomized in the monumental architecture of the Washington Mall, and the catastrophe of totalitarianism as displayed in the photographs, creates a powerful contrast.[6] Indeed, it is precisely this distinction that allowed for the establishment of a European event within an American memorial landscape. Yet observations such as Sontag's raise further questions regarding the choice of these photographs over the literally thousands of images available to those who would ultimately shape the exhibition's final form. What do such choices illustrate about the *meaning* ascribed to the Holocaust at the USHMM? How do elements of the USHMM's permanent exhibition and memorial spaces crystallize to create a memory of the Holocaust that is at once historical and metahistorical, a documentary of events but also an exposition of meaning; a quest to understand and display the searing memory of Europe's death camps as a universally recognized 'watershed Event'?[7]

The contentious nature of this commemorative mission was thrown into sharp relief in debates concerning the 'uniqueness' of the Holocaust and the centrality of Jewish victimhood that beset the institution from its beginnings in the 1979 *President's Commission on the Holocaust* through to the present. Achieving consensus on these controversial issues was possibly the greatest challenge that faced Holocaust survivor and by then internationally acclaimed author Elie Wiesel during his Chairmanship of both the President's Commission and the United States Holocaust Memorial Council (USHMC) from 1979 to 1986. This potentially divisive issue would also come to preoccupy Michael Berenbaum in his professional role as Project Director of the USHMM from 1986 through to the museum's opening in 1993. While certainly not the only people to hold sway over the development and final form of the institution, both Wiesel and Berenbaum displayed the facility and desire to communicate their respective metahistorical and theological visions of 'what the Holocaust was'. These abilities, combined with the authority of their personal and professional influence within the organization, makes essential a review of their respective positions on these key issues. Taken together, their articulation of the Holocaust as a 'watershed Event' at once 'unique and universal' still forms the conceptual foundation upon which

the exhibitions, education programmes and research agenda of the USHMM continue to rest.

Originally developed to placate those members of the President's Commission who would not see the Holocaust's 'Jewish core' diluted, the 'unique and universal' conceptual framework proved effective in ameliorating what was an extremely divisive issue in the institutions' early years. In their preoccupation with these questions, the Commissioners, Council members and professional staff who would eventually build the USHMM became focussed on the Holocaust's *reception* into American public life. No longer simply an internal concern of the American Jewish community, commemoration of the Holocaust would, in the development and opening of the USHMM, necessarily become part of America's national story. The implications that the museum's American setting would have for its historical content, encapsulated in that now well-worn adage, the 'Americanization of the Holocaust', has been well documented.[8] Even so, the influence of these national imperatives on the *memorial* framework and overall commemorative thrust of the USHMM is yet to be uncovered, and its implications for the historical and political reach of the institution laid bare. Indeed, what is yet to be recognized and examined in this explicitly *memorial* museum is how its ostensibly historical framework was and is built upon metahistorical roots: roots that begin within the Jewish commemorative tradition yet end without.

It is a metahistorical understanding of the Holocaust as 'negative epiphany', an 'inverse Sinai' that, I argue, underpins and gives rise to the 'unique and universal' shape of Holocaust memory at the USHMM.[9] Indeed, what this chapter will reveal and explicate is how Wiesel and Berenbaum's conceptual understanding of the Holocaust as both 'unique and universal' functions as the *secular articulation* of this 'negative epiphany'. In isolating and exploring the potency of this idea within the vision of the museum's founders alongside its architectural forms, sections of the permanent exhibition and dedicated memorial spaces, I demonstrate that this supposedly secular institution also shapes and transmits a *sacred memory*, a 'built theodicy'. In likening the import of Auschwitz to that of Sinai, the founders of the USHMM imbued the historical events of the Holocaust with metahistorical import. Just as Sinai set into motion the distinct, covenantal mission of the People Israel, so too did the USHMM's founders understand Auschwitz as signifying the beginning of an *inverse* covenantal vision: a revelation generated not by the appearance of a benevolent Deity but rather through the manifestation of a merciless 'anti-God'.[10]

In this 'prototypically modern' transfiguration of an ancient formula, 'chosenness' is found in the 'unique' suffering of European Jewry while the 'Commanding Voice of Auschwitz' speaks not to one nation but to all – a 'universal' message. As such, the 'negative epiphany' of Auschwitz subtly changes the content of the original revelation while also radically enlarging its intended audience. At the USHMM, the biblical, Sinaitic covenant – a sacred contract containing both ethical and ritual law and sealed between one God and His chosen nation – is transfigured into a universal covenant between an 'anti-God' and the 'family of Man'. A 'new covenant' was forged in the ashes of Auschwitz, but for the USHMM's founders, it was the sacred suffering, rather than the sacred mission of the People of Israel that would transmit the content of this covenant to all humanity.

In the Beginning

The final form of the USHMM belies the intense debate that fuelled its development. The idea to build a national museum in Washington that would serve as a 'living memorial' to the Holocaust only originated in 1979 with the deliberations of the President's Commission on the Holocaust. While lobbying for a national Holocaust memorial preceded the establishment of the Commission,[11] the form that this memorial would take was to be long debated. Thirty years hence, it is possible to discern a pattern to the history of Holocaust representation in the United States and the various 'forms' of Holocaust memory that it has produced, with the opening of the USHMM and the release of *Schindler's List* in 1993 now recognised as major turning points.[12] In 1979, however, popular Holocaust consciousness was only in its formative stages. The President's Commission undertook its deliberations in a context where the shape of Holocaust memory in the United States was both largely fragmented and hotly debated.[13]

It is unsurprising, therefore, that the proposal for a museum to serve as a 'living memorial' to the Holocaust was not the only idea floated in the initial deliberations of the President's Commission, nor was it overwhelmingly supported by all Commission members.[14] Lucy Dawidowicz, whose study, *The War Against the Jews*,[15] forms a seminal text in Holocaust historiography, lodged her official objections to the idea of a museum becoming the centrepiece of the memorial edifice in a letter to the then Director, Rabbi Irving Greenberg.[16] Dawidowicz suggested that, if anything, 'it should work the other way', a monument/memorial should be the centrepiece, a museum its appendage. While

Dawidowicz was defeated by a majority decision that a 'living' museum rather than a conventional 'static' memorial be built in Washington, in one sense history has borne out her desire, as the entire edifice of the USHMM's final architectural form underscores the project's overwhelming memorializing intent.

In 'Opinions expressed by the Commissioners', a brief compiled on 6 February 1979, just prior to the opening session of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, there is no consensus on what a national, American memorial to the Holocaust might look like, what form it might take or even where it would be built.[17] Edward T. Linenthal, whose book, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, is the most comprehensive institutional history of the USHMM to date, sees the debate over the placement of the memorial (whatever its final form) as setting not only the physical, but also the ideological dimensions of American Holocaust memory. The dispute centred between the choice of New York or Washington, DC. Would an American memory of the Holocaust be framed by more universal (DC) or parochial (NYC) concerns?[18] This view is somewhat reductionist in light of Dawidowicz's suggestion that, whatever the final form of the memorial, it would be best placed adjacent to the United Nations and therefore be suggestive of an *international* rather than national framework for America's Holocaust memorial.[19] However, the debate does serve to illustrate the fluid nature of ideas at the outset of the project.

The official mandate given to the members of the President's Commission on the Holocaust as outlined in Executive Order 12093 required Commissioners:

1 To report to the President and the Secretary of the Interior recommendations to establish and maintain an appropriate memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust.
2 To report the feasibility of obtaining funds through contributions by the American people for the creation and maintenance of the memorial.
3 To recommend appropriate ways for the nation to commemorate April 28th and 29th, 1979, which Congress has resolved shall be 'Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust'.[20]

Most of the conversation at the opening session of the Commission centred on the first point as to what an 'appropriate memorial' to the Holocaust might entail. What is immediately striking about the debate

is that it was the *meaning* of the Holocaust rather than an exposition of its history that formed the Commissioners' central focus. While the need for rigorous historical research and associated educational programmes was also stressed, it was the *memory* of the Holocaust and its ongoing significance that became the focal point of the discussion.

As the debate unfolded, it became evident that the Holocaust's 'meaning' in its proposed American setting was conceived of as fluid and far-reaching. For some Commissioners, the task of an American remembrance of the Holocaust 'should inform the world to deter tyranny where it develops and remind the nations of the world to defend human rights and dignity'; while for others it 'should be dedicated to the six million Jews that died'. Still others felt it should deal with 'the life and culture that was destroyed and not only with the death and destruction process', while another Commissioner stressed the need for a memorial that would 'illustrate our commitment to the future of mankind and not just commemorate the events of the Holocaust'. Only one recorded opinion stated that an appropriate memorial 'should in some way provide a foundation for accurately understanding the facts and the experience of the Holocaust.'[21] For the majority of the Commissioners, recounting the historical 'facts' of the Holocaust paled in comparison with the task of explicating the immense moral legacy its memory bequeathed.

Commissioners were then divided into six working groups and each group offered suggestions for what an 'appropriate memorial' might entail. Ideas ranged from quite modest educational ventures such as a 'clearing house information center', to a full-blown 'multi-functional building – monument and educational/archival center' incorporating a 'continuing education program, fellowships, and chairs on the subject of the Holocaust' alongside a built memorial.[22] A museum was also one of the recommendations given for an 'appropriate memorial' but, again, the memorial aspect took precedence even in this suggestion. Whatever form a proposed museum might take, in the Commissioners' vision it would display history in the service of memory and not the other way around.

The Commission's recommendations were submitted in a 'Report to the President' on 27 September 1979. In the report a 'living memorial' is described, comprising three elements:

1 A memorial/museum
2 An educational foundation
3 A Committee on Conscience

In addition, the report recommended the establishment of National Days of Remembrance, the continued pursuit of Nazi War Criminals and the exertion of continued official US pressure to ensure the restoration of Jewish cemeteries in Europe. Also included was a recommendation of a private–public partnership to fund the building of the memorial.[23] In 1980 Congress approved the plan unanimously and the United States Holocaust Memorial Council (USHMC) was immediately established as the successor to the Commission, entrusted with bringing to fruition a 'living memorial' to the Holocaust in Washington. Framing all these practical recommendations was the overarching imperative that, whatever the final form of the 'living memorial', it must 'transform the living by transmitting the legacy of the Holocaust'.[24] Thus, the memorialization of the Holocaust in its proposed American setting became charged with containing and conveying a metahistorical message, a message of meaning, from the outset. No one individual was more influential in shaping this message than the Commission's Chairman, Holocaust survivor, writer and activist Elie Wiesel, who summed up the transformative nature of the project in his Opening Statement to Commission members: 'We are all entering this project together with a sense of history. The moment is solemn because it is linked to history, and because it tries to turn history into a moral endeavor.'[25]

Building a Mystery

Institutions, like human beings, are shaped in their formative years. The influence of the 'founding fathers' on an institution's mission and priorities is far greater than those who come after. It is in these early stages of institutional development that the ideas that form the bedrock of the organization are conceived. So much so, that even if these ideas are transgressed or retracted at a later date, they remain a primary point of reference in all future debates. Elie Wiesel set such boundaries in his opening statement as chairman to the first meeting of the President's Commission on the Holocaust on 15 February 1979, stating:

> By its scope and incommensurable magnitude, its sheer weight of numbers, by its mystery and silence, the Holocaust defies anything the human being can conceive of or aspire to …
>
> We lack a reference point. We don't know what to do because of the uniqueness of the event. We cannot even go back into history and learn that this is what people used to do to commemorate such events, because there is no such event.[26]

In this extraordinary statement, Wiesel articulated both a historical and metahistorical understanding of 'what the Holocaust was' that would prove enormously influential to both the structure and content of the USHMM.

Wiesel's influence permeated all aspects of the USHMM's development. His stature as a survivor, writer and activist[27] in both the American Jewish and broader communities ensured his ongoing influence on members of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council (USHMC)[28] and the USHMM professional staff, even after his resignation as chairperson of the USHMC in 1986. Indeed, when news of Wiesel's resignation was announced at the 4 December meeting, Council members implored him to stay on as the project's 'spiritual leader'.[29]

To paraphrase Wiesel's metahistorical understanding of the Holocaust at the time of his Chairmanship: the 'Event' defies human comprehension, it is of history but also beyond it, it lacks precedent and it cannot be contained within existing commemorative strategies. In insisting on the 'mystery and silence' of the Holocaust, Wiesel introduces a metahistorical dimension without which he contends there can be no 'true' understanding and subsequent rendering of the sacred memory of the Holocaust.[30] While profound in its theological connotations,[31] such a definition has the effect of placing the Holocaust *outside* of history. It is, in retrospect, a great irony that at the precise point at which the Holocaust is given 'official' recognition by Congress as an event of immense historical significance, Wiesel calls into question the very notion of rendering Holocaust history within secular historical frameworks such as the museum.

Wiesel's theological interpretation of the Holocaust was well developed by the time of the President's Commission; so much so that Robert Alter, in a 1981 *Commentary* article 'Deformations of the Holocaust', identified Wiesel as occupying a 'middle ground' between a 'rightist and particular centrist' position, alongside influential post-Holocaust theologians, Emil Fackenheim and Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, who was appointed Project Director at the outset of the President's Commission. Alter classifies Wiesel's perspective as positioned between an ahistorical and 'militant Zionist' interpretation of the Holocaust and a universalist 'progressive' interpretation, typified by the leftist political quarterly, *The Generation After*. Alter feared both perspectives would lead to an equally ahistorical interpretation of the Holocaust; the former through invoking the memory of the Holocaust in the name of an extreme, particularist framework in which every threat against Jewry or Israel represented 'another Auschwitz', the latter to harness support for a radically

universalist equivocation of all genocides as 'Holocausts', thereby sidelining the particularity of the Jewish experience.[32]

Those thinkers associated with the 'middle ground' attempted to forge a balance between universalist and particularist interpretations, defending Jewish claims of persecution while pleading for a 'politics of conscience' that would 'protest genocide or the denial of human rights wherever they occur'.[33] Alter noted that many supporters of this position 'were recruited for the President's Commission on the Holocaust and its supporting staff and advisory board.'[34] The centrist position was exemplified by figures such as Wiesel and Greenberg and was keenly identified by Alter to be inordinately influenced by theological concerns in comparison with either the rightist or leftist positions. Thirty years hence, the remarkable resilience of the centrist position as 'the' paradigm through which the Holocaust is interpreted in the USHMM is striking. But from where did this position emerge and how did it come to provide such a powerful and flexible interpretative framework? If those who developed it took theological considerations seriously, what was the content of these theological ideas and how did they come to shape the USHMM's underlying, metahistorical paradigm?

While difficult to ascertain exactly when such ideas can be said to have 'taken hold', it is possible to trace their beginnings to Wiesel's commentary and initiatives during his time as Chairman of both the President's Commission and the USHMC. Wiesel's metahistorical understanding of the 'Event' as essentially 'mysterious' entailed profound consequences for many aspects of the USHMM's development and final form but was perhaps at its most influential vis-à-vis arguments pertaining to 'victimhood' that beset the USHMC in its formative years. That is, who were the Holocaust's primary victims – and why? This question became central to the Commission's deliberations concerning both the form and function of a proposed Holocaust memorial/museum in Washington.

The President's Commission was, in Wiesel's own words, 'crucial … we had no tradition, no precedent. This was the period when we decided what this would become.'[35] Edward Linenthal understands the Commission's definition of the Holocaust as 'unique and universal' to be the result of Wiesel and other Commission members' fears that they would be accused of 'false universalism' regarding the formation of Holocaust memory at the USHMM. Linenthal continues from this premise to explore the inescapable difficulties involved in maintaining such a position when a memory once particular to a specific group becomes a 'national trust'.[36] Wiesel's response to this dilemma, stated

at the first meeting of the President's Commission, differentiates the Jewish experience of the Holocaust from those of other victims thus: 'while all Jews were victims, not all victims were Jews'. For commentators like Linenthal, Wiesel's formulation was clearly politically motivated – an attempt to reassure Jewish survivors, in particular, that the museum would not take an 'assimilationist' stance toward the question of victimhood.[37] Yet for those Commissioners who would reframe Wiesel's statement through their own theological lenses, the statement resonated on another level entirely. For example, Commissioner Rabbi Dr Alfred Gottschalk recorded this proclamation as a 'holy moment' in the work of the Commission.[38] From this point on, the 'Jewishness' of the 'Event', and in particular the Jewishness of its 'primary' victims, would not only provide the project's historical framework, but it would also perform a metahistorical function – a 'pathway' into the mystery that was the Holocaust.

This dual focus on both the historical and metahistorical development of Holocaust memory in Washington can be evidenced in the official directives emerging from the deliberations of the Commission. In Wiesel's covering letter that begins the official 'Report to the President', it is in the 'Jewishness' of the Holocaust that Wiesel proclaims its 'uniqueness and universality' to reside:

> The universality of the Holocaust lies in its uniqueness; the Event is essentially Jewish, yet its interpretation is universal. It involved even distant nations and persons who lived far away from Birkenau's flames or who were born afterward.[39]

Scholarly debate over Holocaust 'uniqueness' has now largely dissipated.[40] However, at the time of the Commission's deliberations it was an unavoidable question, linked as it was to the need to justify the building on US federal land a museum/memorial dedicated to a genocide perpetrated on foreign soil. Resolution on this issue was of such importance that the 'Uniqueness of the Holocaust' coupled with the 'Moral Obligation to Remember' formed the 'Guiding Principles' underpinning the Commission's final report.[41] 'Uniqueness' was defined in the report as the Nazi attempt to annihilate the entirety of the Jewish people for neither territorial nor economic advantage, but simply due to the fact that 'they were Jews',[42] and the bureaucratic nature of the Final Solution. The 'Moral Obligation to Remember' focused on the power of memory to help avoid repetitions of such events and strengthen the American commitment to democracy. While such lofty

ideals are tempered within the report by acknowledgement of the frailty of memory when faced with political expediency (with the US's own failings throughout the Second World War duly noted), the moral imperative of memory as a central rationale for the establishment of national remembrance of the Holocaust is reiterated in the concluding paragraph which asserts that 'In reflecting on the Holocaust … we can study our triumphs as well as our failures so as to defeat radical evil and strengthen our democracy.'[43] In short, as expressed in its official report, 'Uniqueness' provided the Commission's 'centrist' definition of 'what the Holocaust was' with its 'particular' emphasis, and the 'Moral Obligation to Remember' its 'universal' corollary.

The practical and political utility of the 'unique and universal' framework as encapsulated by Wiesel is clearly apparent, therefore. However, a closer examination of this formulation reveals a deeper, theological notion at play. Wiesel's statement is ahistorical to the extreme yet the sentiment is oddly familiar, familiar enough that it was seemingly accepted without comment. The statement rings with the authority of revelation. Just as the Sinaitic covenant would be incumbent on 'those who are standing here with us this day before the Lord our God and with those who are not with us here this day' (Deuteronomy 29:13), so too does Wiesel characterize the Holocaust as the beginning of a new, universal revelation. A revelation that, like Sinai, transcended place (distant nations and persons) and time (those who were born afterward). Just as Sinai would galvanize the Jewish people as a 'chosen' nation and a light unto the nations so too does the Holocaust, in Wiesel's formulation, galvanize the 'uniqueness of Jewish suffering' as a conduit to a new revelation – a 'prototypically modern revelation', a 'negative epiphany'.

So powerful is Wiesel's commitment to this metahistorical understanding of the Holocaust that he never reverts from his initial suspicion that a museum cannot contain the essential 'mystery' of the 'Event'. His fears are centred not on the professional capability of those who will curate and build the museum. Indeed, in later writings he compliments the achievements of the USHMM.[44] Rather, Wiesel's fears are centred on the question of whether the story itself *can be told* in this or any other physical form. As Michael Berenbaum comments in his reflections upon Wiesel's ambivalence regarding the building of the USHMM:

> Elie Wiesel had an impossible dilemma. I think he's made a monumental contribution to the Holocaust, but he's made one statement

> that is both absolutely wrong and deeply right in one dimension. He said, 'only those who were there will ever know and those who were there can never tell.' If he's right about the second half of the statement, then there's nothing we can do to create with this. And I do not believe that he's ever pushed beyond the statement of the Holocaust as unknowable, and if you look in his memoirs, what he says about the Museum, when he faults it, is that it tells the story of the Holocaust. And that's not a story that should be told.[45]

Wiesel's perspective clearly presented a roadblock in the building and development of the USHMM. It also creates enormous difficulties for those attempting to assimilate the Holocaust within traditional Jewish responses to destruction. His focus on both uniqueness and silence as defining characteristics of the 'Event' threatens to place the Holocaust not only outside of secular history but also sacred history as it has been traditionally rendered in Jewish thought. By virtue of Wiesel's influence regarding Holocaust memory in both the Jewish and broader communities, the two cannot be considered in isolation. What might be characterized as Wiesel's 'struggle' with the place and meaning of the Holocaust *within* traditional Jewish frameworks also influenced his characterization of the Holocaust *beyond* the Jewish world.

Wiesel's understanding of the Holocaust as 'mystery', evoking only 'silence' as a truly appropriate response, is evidenced throughout his literary output.[46] He is perhaps the most 'Jewish' of survivor writers/activists, his modus operandi once even described as operating in a manner akin to a 'Hassidic court',[47] with one commentator going so far as to describe him as the 'defacto high priest of our generation'.[48] Indeed, Wiesel is perhaps the survivor/writer most closely associated and conversant with Jewish tradition.[49] Born into an observant family in the town of Sighet, Hungary, his own and others' accounts of his childhood testify to his knowledge and engagement with Jewish life, tradition and history. Wiesel's writings are distinguished by their frequent allusion in both form and content to the classical Jewish literary corpus.[50] Any reader of either his novels or shorter literary works will immediately feel the influence of traditional Jewish literary themes and forms, in particular his use of legend and storytelling, which might be best understood to fall within the genre of *midrash*.

As such, it is small wonder that Wiesel's interpretation of the meaning and import of the Holocaust is at once historical and metahistorical. This view accords with the traditional practice evidenced in Jewish canonical texts to interpret historical events in light of the

transcendent purpose and mission of the 'People Israel'. More remarkable, however, is that Wiesel's metahistorical view of Jewish history functioned even at the highest levels of state. The following description of Wiesel's conversation with President Carter upon accepting the chairmanship of the President's Commission on the Holocaust provides a case in point:

> He (Wiesel) indicated to President Carter … that there was no reason for an American President to enter Jewish history. However, Carter by dint of circumstance and fate had such an opportunity. Jewish history, he stated, was different from general history. General history was objective and factual. Jewish history was full of affect, full of feeling and passion. Anyone who entered the stream of Jewish history was viewed in either a positive or negative sense – a Mordechi or a Haman.[51] Carter had an opportunity to enter the stream of Jewish history in a most unusual and cosmic way. His recognition of the importance of the Holocaust to human civilization is something that Elie Wiesel impressed upon him.[52]

The quotation provides a stark demonstration of Wiesel's metahistorical preoccupations. For Wiesel, the Holocaust enveloped the Jewish people into the mainstream of 'general history' but it also fundamentally altered the course of that history. In other words, the Holocaust was experienced within history, yet its import reaches into the metahistorical – into the realm of *meaning* in history – demanding that we examine not simply 'what happened and why' but *what meaning* this history might hold for our present and future.

Viewed from this perspective, it is arguable that Wiesel's conception of the Holocaust remains within the confines of traditional (and pre-modern) Jewish thought. Wiesel is simply following the dominant patterns of traditional Jewish thought, where historical events are explained in light of a transcendent reality. However, his metahistorical interpretation of the Holocaust also *consciously transgresses* Jewish tradition. As evidenced in liturgical, ritual and literary responses, and in particular responses to destruction, traditional Jewish thought is essentially archetypical in nature.[53] The tendency within Jewish liturgical and literary responses to destruction has been to 'collapse' the historical record into a pre-existing metahistorical framework. Wiesel's desire to have the Holocaust remembered as 'exceptional' stands, therefore, in contradistinction to traditional Jewish liturgical commemorations such as *Tisha B'Av* (9th of Av), in which distinct historical tragedies are

grouped together into an undifferentiated typology of destruction and redemption. It should be noted that this desire is not without historical precedent. After other major destructions in Jewish history, new fast days and commemorative rituals were enacted in light of what was understood to be 'extraordinary suffering'. However, the majority of these practices were no longer in use just a few generations after the respective tragedies.[54] While Wiesel interprets the Holocaust as having metahistorical and transcendent meaning, he also sets the Holocaust 'apart' from other tragedies in Jewish history, stretching traditional Jewish thought to breaking point.

In light of these ideas, Wiesel's approach to creating Holocaust memory in Washington can be understood as both product *and* transformation of traditional Jewish metahistorical understandings of history. In Michael Berenbaum's study of Wiesel's written corpus, *Elie Wiesel: God, the Holocaust and the Children of Israel*, he underscores the point that, due to Wiesel's fluency with the tradition, we 'must assume that where Wiesel distorts or transforms the original images such a transformation is deliberate.'[55] Wiesel's position with regard to the meaning and sacred significance of the Holocaust can perhaps be best characterized as a struggle with, rather than a direct continuation of, Jewish tradition.[56] Indeed, it is in his engagement with tradition that Wiesel is perhaps at his most radical. Wiesel's insistence on the mystery of the Holocaust and the centrality of the Jewish experience stretch even the historical record. For example, upon presenting the report of the President's Commission on the Holocaust to President Carter on 27 September 1979, Wiesel asserted that:

> … as a Jew I also came to realize that although all Jews were victims, not all victims were Jews … this is perhaps the first lesson we may draw from the Event, Mr. President, that although the Jews were the first to be killed, they were not the only ones; others followed.[57]

Here it is Wiesel's metahistorical vision that shapes his historical understanding. The interpretation precedes the event. For while his statement is correct with regard to Nazi racial classifications – the Jews were indeed the only national/ethnic group that the Nazis sought to destroy in their entirety – it is chronologically inaccurate. There can be no doubt that as the primary target of Nazi racial persecution 'all Jews were victims', yet Nationalist Socialist extermination of particular groups did not begin with the Jews, but rather with the disabled in the 'T4' operations.[58]

The point is not to suggest that Wiesel wilfully or even knowingly distorted history. Rather, what is at stake for Wiesel is a metahistorical vision of the Holocaust where the particular experience of the Jewish people is the exemplar, the way into the *tremendum*. Michael Berenbaum further expounds this view when commenting on a similar point that is recorded in the President's Commission on the Holocaust written report:

> It [the report] says the Holocaust is a systematic state sponsored murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II; as night descended millions of others were killed in their wake. What makes it false is that it presumes that it began with the Jews, it did not … the first to be arrested were political dissidents and trade unionists. The first to be killed were the mentally retarded and the physically infirm. … In fact, the longer the events persisted, the more concentrated the effort of the annihilation of the Jews, but it was metaphysically true. It was historically false but metaphysically true …[59]

Wiesel remains firmly committed to this view throughout his work as Chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust and the Council that became the Commission's successor body. This understanding of the metahistorical importance and centrality of Jewish victimhood continues to be influential as evidenced in Wiesel's statement accompanying the Design Concept Proposal presented to the Council on 31 January 1986, where he repeats and expands on this point:

> While not all victims were Jews, all Jews were victims, destined for annihilation solely because they were born Jewish. … because they were the principal target of Hitler's final solution, we must remember the 6 million Jewish victims and *through them and beyond them, but never without them, rescue from oblivion* all the men, women and children, Jewish and non-Jewish, who perished in those years in the forests and camps of the Kingdom of Night.[60]

The centrality of Jewish victimhood is coupled here with the redemptive, even resurrective, power of memory for Wiesel. Not to acknowledge the centrality of the Jewish experience is tantamount to 'killing them twice'. Thus, for Wiesel, advocating a view of 'what the Holocaust was' in which the centrality of Jewish victimhood is retained may be political but it is also metahistorical – the pathway into the sacred mystery of the Holocaust.

Thirty-five years have passed since Wiesel's chairmanship of the USHMC, but his views on the Holocaust as 'sacred mystery' have remained constant. While he cannot be considered a systematic theologian, perhaps his most concise theological statement concerning the Holocaust is contained in his first book of memoirs, *All Rivers Run to the Sea: Memoirs Volume One: 1928–1969*. In a short chapter dealing with the issue of God's presence in history, and, in particular, the relationship between God's presence (or lack thereof) and Jewish suffering, Wiesel focuses upon *midrashic* legends that recount God's 'following His children into Exile' – in other words, Israel's suffering is also God's suffering. Where Wiesel's differs from the original *midrashic* explanation is his insistence on the inadequacy of the fable as an explanation for the Holocaust. What is the purpose of such suffering, he asks? Why should God add His own suffering to the already unimaginable suffering of millions? What purpose would this serve? The only 'answer' is mystery:

> But it is not our place to make decisions for God. He alone has discretion in the thousands of ways of joining His suffering to ours. We can neither elicit nor reject them, but can only seek to be worthy of them, even without understanding. Where God is concerned, all is mystery.[61]

Wiesel confesses that sometimes this explanation is 'not enough', commenting that 'nothing justifies Auschwitz. Were the Lord Himself to offer me a justification, I think I would reject it.'[62] The 'question mark' of God's presence remains, but the mystery must still be commemorated. It is in this commemoration that Wiesel's focus on memory as mystery comes into play:

> Commenting on a verse of the Prophet Jeremiah according to which God says, 'I shall weep in secret', the *midrash* remarks that there is a place called 'secret' and that when God is sad, He takes refuge there to weep. For us this secret place lies in memory, which possesses its own secret.[63]

For Wiesel, therefore, the challenge in creating Holocaust memory at the USHMM is the task of transforming 'sacred mystery' into built form. Holocaust memory can never be approached through the purely historical, yet the metahistorical must also be transformed in its encounter with the historical events of the Holocaust.

Wiesel's engagement with and transformation of tradition is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in his allusions to the revelatory and redemptive nature of Holocaust memory. Recounting the events of a research trip made by Commission members to the sites of the former death camps, he describes his experience thus:

> Once again, a heavy silence envelops us. I imagine it is not unlike the one that preceded the Revelation at Sinai. The Talmud has this poetic description: 'the silence was such that the cattle stopped bellowing, the dogs stopped barking, the wind stopped blowing, the sea stopped heaving, and the birds gave up chattering … The universe held its breath, in expectation of the Divine word…'[64]

While the mention of Sinai might alert some readers to the work of the influential post-Holocaust theologian Emil Fackenheim, Wiesel's understanding of revelation is distinguished from that of the former through its invocation of mystery. Wiesel expects no 'commanding voice' at Auschwitz, only silent mystery. The mystery of Sinai is repeated at Auschwitz in import if not in content. For Wiesel, Auschwitz indeed embodied a 'negative epiphany'.

Auschwitz: Egypt or Sinai?

Wiesel was not the only individual for whom theology explicitly inspired his work at the USHMM. As he resigned his post in 1986, other influential individuals would come to the fore, to continue to shape and mould the underlying metahistorical shape of the USHMM. In particular, this task would be taken up by an individual that Wiesel himself had fired in the early years of the Commission's functioning, Michael Berenbaum, the man who would become the founding Project Director of the USHMM.[65] Berenbaum served on the professional staff of the President's Commission and Council from 1979 to 1980, as USHMM Project Director from 1988 to 1993 and the Director of the USHMM Research Institute from 1993 to 1998. Berenbaum came to these positions with scholarly training in history and theology as well as rabbinic *smicha*. Despite his rather fraught professional relationship with Wiesel, Berenbaum is unambiguous regarding the profound influence of Wiesel's thought on his own, noting how this influence extended into his own work as Project Director in the development stage of the USHMM.[66]

Berenbaum recognised that despite their professional disagreements that '… the degree to which Wiesel had significance [on the USHMM] ironically came through me and the influence he had on my understanding of the Holocaust … whom he had fired six years earlier and fired from the museum.' Berenbaum characterized his and others break from Wiesel as in many ways a pragmatic decision, as Wiesel's insistence on the ineffable nature of the Holocaust meant that 'after seven years there was nothing there … no document'. Indeed, despite Wiesel's considerable influence, other survivors on the USHMC were, according to Berenbaum, eventually forced to go against Wiesel's vision in order to ensure the project would proceed: '… the survivors, you know, collectively stepped forward and none of them had the charisma and authority of him … they were left knowing that they had to decide to go forward and indeed Lerman, Meed and Rosensaft decide to break with him by not deciding to resign with him'.[67]

Like Wiesel, Berenbaum was also committed to forging an explicitly metahistorical interpretation of Holocaust memory at the USHMM. However, unlike Wiesel, he firmly believed that the story of the Holocaust *can and must* be told.

> If at the end we come to the conclusion that the Holocaust is incomprehensible, that's fine at the conclusion, but it can't be the outset … if a dimension of understanding eludes us, so be it but you have to theoretically believe that the Holocaust is comprehensible … the historian, the theologian has to begin with 'I can understand this' Otherwise you are deliberately impotent.[68]

To give physical form to history, museum narratives must be couched in viable theoretical frameworks that allow for the detailed work of curation and design to take place. Largely in response to the dilemma of 'victimhood', Berenbaum formulated a working definition of the Holocaust that satisfied the majority of the USHMC's insistence on Holocaust 'uniqueness' and Jewish particularism. His development of the concept of the Holocaust as 'unique and universal', based on the Commission and Council's formative discussions under Wiesel's leadership, attempted to address two central goals: to retain the centrality of the extermination of European Jewry in National Socialist ideology, and also to allow for the persecution of other groups to be explored, documented and placed in historical perspective.[69] As mentioned above, this definition has drawn its fair share of criticism, but such critiques have

generally focussed on either the historical or political ramifications of the approach. What remains to be examined is how Berenbaum understood and developed this model into the secular articulation of Wiesel's 'negative epiphany' and its theological and practical implications.

Berenbaum's metahistorical interpretation of the Holocaust can be discerned in his work in leading the development of the USHMM and his writings on the subject. Following Wiesel both conceptually and chronologically, Berenbaum develops a metahistorical vision of the Holocaust that explicitly engages with, transgresses and ultimately transcends its Jewish roots. For Berenbaum, the Holocaust is unambiguously a 'negative epiphany'. Extending Wiesel's interpretation of the silence of Auschwitz echoing the silence of Sinai, Berenbaum also equates the two as revelatory events, albeit of radically different natures. Unlike Wiesel, however, he is prepared to delve into the content of the epiphany, to make sense of the 'demands' of Auschwitz on the Jewish people and humanity.

> As a theologian I spend most of my time reading history ... I am bound by the history but I want to at least suggest a metahistory ... the metahistory in that sense is that I believe this is a sacred event ... theologically I would say it is the revelation of the anti-God and the anti-Man.[70]

Sinai, in both the biblical and rabbinic traditions, encapsulates the fundamental covenantal contract between God and Israel. Sinai holds many complex issues for Jewish theology but its central focus is upon the giving and receiving of the commandments, the acceptance and practice of which the classical rabbis would later come to describe as the 'yoke of the kingdom of heaven'. Sinai is an affirmation that God's will is made manifest in His commandments and in choosing to accept and observe these statutes the Israelites choose nothing less than 'life' itself, encapsulated in the biblical verse: 'Choose life, if you and your offspring would live, by loving the Lord your God, heeding His commands and holding fast to Him' (Deuteronomy 30:19–20).

In the Bible, Sinai is set *against* the experience of slavery in Egypt. Moses' plea to Pharaoh to 'Let My People Go' is always accompanied by its corollary, 'that they may worship Me in the desert' (Exodus 5:1). Sinai is the necessary consequence of Egypt yet, unlike Egypt, the Sinaitic experience is distinguished in that it involves a degree of choice. The leading modern Orthodox Rabbi and philosopher of the twentieth century, Joseph Soloveitchik, goes so far as to base his

definition of covenant in the Jewish tradition in a juxtaposition of these two events.[71] In his famous formulation, Egypt symbolizes Israel's 'covenant of fate', Sinai its 'covenant of destiny'. Placed against this paradigm, the radical nature of both Wiesel and Berenbaum's conflation of Auschwitz and Sinai is clearly apparent. Whereas in classical Jewish thought an event like the Holocaust would fall most clearly into the covenant of fate, of Egypt, in Berenbaum's formulation the 'Event' has become Sinai, a covenant of destiny.

> … at Sinai we heard 'I am the Lord thy God who took you out of the land of Egypt' … the reality is that how we are behaving as it were, becomes the Sinai … all Jews were in the Exodus, all Jews stood at Sinai and the Jewish people have given voice to the Exodus, which is hope in a world of despair and Sinai which is the revelation of God and the call to humanity to achieve greatness, holiness and sacredness. Now Jewish history has deepened because we all stood at Auschwitz and we all heard the revelation of the anti-God and the anti-Humanity and in reality we have to give testimony to both.[72]

Berenbaum sees no contradiction in his use of the Sinai/Auschwitz analogy; he does not distinguish between Sinai as covenant of destiny and Auschwitz as its opposite. In his formulation, Egypt and Sinai become one rather than standing in dialectical tension. Further, Berenbaum proceeds to universalize his definition of Sinai, transforming Sinai into an event that *implicates all people*, not one, a call to all 'humanity to achieve greatness'.

Intriguing though Berenbaum's use of the Sinai/Auschwitz analogy may be, it subtly alters the understanding of revelation in classical Jewish thought. In its biblical context and subsequent rabbinic interpretations the covenant at Sinai is not a call to humanity but rather a call to a particular people. In their response to that call, the Israelites agree to act as a witness to God's presence for all humanity but they do not seek to transmit that message and its contractual obligations (*halacha*) to the world. Rather, the demands of Sinai are understood to be incumbent upon a particular people who undertake to live in a distinct, covenantal relationship with their God. Berenbaum conflates the universality of the Exodus story with the universalism of the story that has largely been the result of its treatment in traditions *other than* Judaism.[73] The Jewish tradition does not universalize the Exodus story, nor its Sinaitic corollary, although in the modern period in particular there has been a recognition and celebration of the universality inherent

in the narrative.[74] It is in its entry into the consciousness of *other faith traditions* that the Exodus story is universalized. So, too, in Berenbaum's transformation of the Holocaust into a 'unique and universal' story, the modern narrative of Jewish suffering finds its redemptive end beyond the Jewish world.

Berenbaum's redemptive finale is found in the stated mission of the USHMM. This mission evolved from the Commission's initial directive that a National Holocaust Memorial Museum must 'apply historical events to contemporary complexities'[75] to culminate in an institution whose 'primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy'.[76] At the USHMM, the 'negative epiphany' of Auschwitz speaks through its victims to inspire moral and ethical reflection in the present. Like all moral imperatives drawn from history, in this definition the Holocaust speaks beyond its historic specificity; telling us more about the responsibilities of democratic citizenship in contemporary America than the devastating impact of National Socialism in mid-twentieth-century Europe. Indeed, in its stated mission the institution has remained true to the words of President Jimmy Carter in his address at the National Civil Holocaust Commemoration Ceremony on 24 April 1979:

> … we will strive to build out of our memories of the Holocaust a world joined by a true fellowship of human understanding, a world of tolerance and diversity in which all peoples can live in dignity and in peace.[77]

In Berenbaum's explicit transition from the particular to the universal we can discern another, related theological idea at play, one connected closely to the biblical theology of 'chosenness'. As biblical scholar Jon D. Levenson has noted, there is 'probably nothing in Judaism that has attracted so much attention and generated so much controversy as the biblical idea that the Jews are the chosen people'.[78] Levenson argues that while historically this idea has been largely characterized as 'exclusivist' in nature that, when understood against the backdrop of the Hebrew Bible's insistence on the universal nature of God and ultimate ends (epitomized both in the universal creation stories of Genesis and the messianic visions of the prophet Isaiah: Chapters 40–66), a more subtle dynamic can be detected between the particular fate of Israel

and the universalistic fate of 'the nations'. This tension is encapsulated in the verse 'I will also make you a light of nations, that My salvation may reach the ends of the earth' (Isaiah 49:6). For ultimate salvation to occur in the future, the Israelites agree to fulfil a particular role in the present – to witness God's presence in history through ethical but also *ritual* service to God – to maintain the covenant as embodied in *halacha*.[79] Understood thus, the theology of chosenness contains 'no contradiction between *historical* particularism and *eschatological* universalism, limited or total'.[80]

While Levenson reminds us that an anthology such as the Hebrew Bible, compiled over hundreds of years by several authors (or schools of thought), cannot be understood as offering a single theology on any item of belief,[81] the later rabbinic tradition, and the modern streams of Judaism that are heirs to that tradition, *do* read these texts as theologically coherent. At the very least, the biblical theologies can be understood to provide the deep structure upon which normative Judaism continues to rest. For our purposes, a detailed discussion of the theology of chosenness is unnecessary. What is important is the fact that it is axiomatic to biblical belief that the chosenness of Israel is inextricably linked to the fate of 'the nations' (non-Israelites). In this theology, the relationship between Israel and humanity is deeply symbiotic – it is only through interdependency that ultimate salvation will take place; in other words, the salvation of Israel leads to the salvation of humanity. Likewise, we can discern that the negative revelation of Auschwitz has set a new such covenant in motion for both Wiesel and Berenbaum, a revelation of atrocity bestowed upon the Jewish people yet relayed through them to all humanity.

Wiesel references such an idea in his closing comments to the first meeting of the President's Commission on 15 February 1979 where he ties 'uniqueness and universality' unambiguously to the 'saving power' of Holocaust memory:

> It is because we stress the uniqueness of the events that they stress their universality. After all, only the tale of what has been done to our people – and beyond it, to other peoples – can save all peoples.[82]

Earlier in the same meeting Wiesel explicitly links the work of the Commission to greater concerns than simply a recounting of history for its own sake. Rather, he understands the work of the Commission to 'turn history into a moral endeavour'.[83] Likewise, this view is continued and expanded in Berenbaum's approach:

> What we are doing to the Holocaust is we are taking a particular story and universalizing it, that is bequeathing it to everybody, to deepen human conscience, to enlarge the domain of human responsibility, to plead for human dignity and human decency and to enjoin certain normative behaviour. That's how the ancient Israelites responded to slavery in the Exodus, that's how we are responding to the *Shoah*.[84]

Again, Berenbaum draws upon the tradition and transforms it in one theological fell swoop. He ascribes to the Holocaust the status of Revelation/Sinai yet bases this appellation on the universal ethical norms derived from the experience of the Exodus/Egypt. While the two are indeed inextricably linked, what is missed entirely in Berenbaum's formulation is the radically nomian character of the Sinai event. Egypt does provide a powerful ethical imperative that is recounted again and again throughout the biblical narrative, 'you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of a stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt' (Exodus 23:9), but it is Sinai that galvanizes the Children of Israel as a people with distinct and ritualized responsibilities. In the negative revelation of Auschwitz as constructed by Berenbaum the ritual commandments fade into the background as the ethical imperatives come to the fore. Thus the new revelation demands no particularized, ritual obligations from its 'witnesses', rather, through witnessing the negative revelation of the 'chosen victims' a new, ethical message will be proclaimed to all humanity.

What is lost, however, in this secularized version of chosenness is any sense of *positive* Jewish particularity. An emphasis on the 'unique' aspect of Jewish victimhood may be powerfully evoked to elicit a 'universal' ethical response but it cannot possibly demand normative observance. In other words, there is no possibility that ritual *mitzvot* (commandments) can emerge out of the negative revelation of Auschwitz, and it is precisely these ritualized *mitzvot* that ensure the particularity of Israel beyond the ethical norms common to adherents of all monotheistic faiths. To acknowledge this proclivity is not to imply that either Berenbaum or Wiesel understand the Holocaust to be a reorienting force for normative Jewish observance.[85] Similarly, whether one agrees with the theological integrity of the shift that has occurred in both Berenbaum and Wiesel's use of the Sinai metaphor to ascribe universal, metahistorical import to Auschwitz is not the ultimate issue at stake in this study, although it may well be worthy of theological critique in its own right. It is what is *enabled* by this interpretive shift that is significant. In the 'negative epiphany' of Auschwitz, it is the *uniqueness*

of Jewish suffering, not the uniqueness of the Jewish covenant, that is transformed into a new universal message for all humanity, quite literally a 'new testament' of sorts. The Commission's original emphasis on 'Uniqueness' coupled with the 'Moral Obligation to Remember' has been achieved. Paradoxically, however, what is lost in the formulation is the Jewish particularity of the victims; a loss that would eventually find its physical embodiment in the architecture, exhibitions and memorial spaces of the USHMM.

From Creation to Revelation

Revelation begins upon approach. The imposing exterior of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is at once connected to and separate from the landscape of 'official Washington', as its structural language deliberately inverts the symbols of democracy surrounding it. Melding seamlessly yet deceptively with its immediate neighbours through the deliberate use of Victorian brick to match the Auditor's Building to the north, and neoclassical limestone corresponding to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to the south, the building is structurally and symbolically connected to and distinguished from its stately neighbours. The imposing 14th Street façade is simply that – a folly – only to be revealed once visitors are confronted by the relatively diminutive, metal-framed doors that lie beyond. The brick towers mimic the forms of the adjacent Auditor's Building while simultaneously evoking the malevolent watchtowers of Europe's death camps. Through these allusions and others comprising the USHMM's interior and exterior forms, architect James Ingo Freed created a building that references the perverse machinations of government gone wrong, evoking the security of democracy while simultaneously exposing its weaknesses and inherent fragility. It is this constant interchange between the monumental and the delicate that creates the building's ambiguity and prepares visitors for the confronting exposition contained within.

Freed referred to his building as a 'resonator of memory',[86] a non-specific form that would evoke but not dictate for each individual the horror and immensity of the Holocaust and its legacy. The following reading of Freed's creation offers one such interpretation by tracing how the USHMM's architecture, permanent exhibition and the dedicated memorial space of the Hall of Remembrance, create and convey a metahistorical dimension to Holocaust memory, an understanding of the Holocaust as a 'negative epiphany'. While it is not assumed that a straight line can be traced between Wiesel and Berenbaum's

respective visions and the final form of the USHMM, a crooked path can be discerned through an examination of the emphasis on memorialization and transformation that shapes the physical structure and exhibition approach of the USHMM from the outset. A visual language is created that, in the words of Raul Hilberg, changes 'the meaning of the Holocaust … before our eyes'[87] from a litany of suffering to an unprecedented opportunity for personal and universal transformation. Harkening back to Sinai, the call goes out from Washington as the Holocaust is recast as a negative revelation that espouses a universal, redemptive message to all.

One can enter into the USHMM and walk through its central axis, the 'Hall of Witness', without setting foot in the permanent exhibition. The memorial language of the building literally *surrounds* the exhibition space, as entry to the exhibition is impossible without first traversing the realm of memory created in the Hall of Witness and completed in the Hall of Remembrance. Thus, the entire structure acts as a mnemonic device, encasing history within a shield of memory. Initially, the Hall of Witness gives the appearance of symmetry but once oriented visitors become aware of the sloping staircase, fractured ceiling and seeming lack of a clear path into which one might proceed. Deliberate disorientation seems to be the intent of the space, only slightly mollified through the necessities of security stations, cloakrooms, information counters and other such practicalities without which the museum could not function. The Hall of Witness prepares visitors for the relentless exposition of Nazi terror that awaits them in the permanent exhibition and the Hall of Remembrance contains the necessary space for consolation and reflection upon exit. Along the way visitors are exhorted, through a skilful interconnecting of display and associated printed materials, to make a constant connection between past and present, to reflect on contemporary manifestations of state-sponsored terror and genocide and to leave with a renewed sense of moral and political agency. The journey through the building and its exhibits is created to be purposefully transformative, with the history of the Holocaust providing the foundation for establishing Holocaust memory as a new touchstone for a universal morality. Indeed, the USHMM explicitly aims to create 'an encounter between the visitor and this moral imperative'.[88]

The final physical form of the USHMM developed over many years and was subject to many modifications along the way, including the decision to create a purpose-built museum rather than utilize existing structures, as well as several changes in the choice of architect.[89] At the beginning of the design process, however, the Council's insistence on

the memorial intent of the venture was clearly articulated in the architectural brief for the proposed memorial museum:

> To begin, the architectural design of the building should be the first statement. As individuals walk by, drive by or fly over the Museum/Memorial, it should declare in very clear terms the meaning of the entire structure. Moreover, the planning should be in a manner that relates the interior of the building to the exterior and vice versa. This will increase the efficiency and meaning of the building.[90]

In its final form, the USHMM's memorial character, as articulated by its founders, is clearly evident. That this memory contains a sacred aspect is explicitly noted in the USHMM's official catalogue:

> … it became a place of pilgrimage soon after it opened its doors to the public. Thousands of people who, walking in silence together through the exhibition galleries, are confronted with the images of extreme human tragedy, undergo an experience similar to that of pilgrims walking together to a sacred place.[91]

So strongly is the memorial intent of the building embedded in its architectural language that the exhibition, as the core element of a traditional history museum, is abdicated in deference to the imperatives of memory. The official catalogue states that 'the building would have been an outstanding architectural statement *even if it had not* contained a historical museum'.[92] Indeed, the institution claims 'it affords visitors an experience similar to that experienced by a believer in a holy place. Like a cathedral, the Hall of Witness is awe-inspiring, overwhelming in its monumentality, making the individual feel small and insignificant'.[93]

Far from accidental, this sense of sacrality at the USHMM is carefully constructed. But exactly which religious traditions and sacred narratives have been referenced to transform historical space into sacred space and how have these traditions been modified as a result? Just as Wiesel and Berenbaum drew upon and ultimately transformed theological ideas deeply embedded in the Jewish tradition to articulate a metahistorical understanding of the Holocaust, so too does the physical form of the USHMM co-opt and transform classical Jewish symbols, rituals, archetypes and narratives to create the physical embodiment of a new revelation, a universal rather than specifically Jewish, 'negative epiphany'.

This process of sacralization begins upon entry. Once inside, visitors are immediately situated *in relationship* to the powerful memory they

are poised to explore. The Hall of Witness is framed by the imposing biblical quotation, inscribed on the black granite wall that faces the grand staircase in large, silver letters proclaiming; 'You are My Witnesses' (Isaiah 43:10). This is one of four biblical quotations in the USHMM, the remaining three are found in the Hall of Remembrance. Despite being decontextualized from its original biblical placement, the verse invokes a sense of religious instruction, a command from the Divine. In its biblical context, the verse is issued as a directive from YHWH, through the Prophet Isaiah to the Children of Israel, who are referred to by the appellation 'My Servant, whom I have chosen'. Preceded by verses that tell of Israel's unique relationship to YHWH and followed by an account of the People's many transgressions, the verse is a reminder to Israel that the norms and obligations of the covenant still stand, despite their disobedience. What is left out in the USHMM's version of the text, therefore, is the exact identities of the speaker, the addressee and the content of the message – only the imperative to witness remains intact. While such omissions might be understood as simply appropriate in the secular and historical space of a museum, one might also legitimately wonder how these omissions alter the 'plain sense' of the text. In other words, in the verse's 'secular' version, who is speaking, to whom and what is the message that is being proclaimed?

Jennifer L. Koosed, in an article exploring how these quotations frame the larger concerns of the USHMM, argues that the 'witnesses', the addressees, are the museum's visitors who, at different stages throughout their visit, are encouraged to identify as victims, bystanders and also liberators. Koosed offers a convincing exposition as to how visitors, moving through the narrative of the display, undergo an experiential identification with each of the three participant categories outlined above.[94] However, Koosed's conclusion that the result of this experience is to make visitors 'separate from and superior to the events before them'[95] is counter-intuitive to her initial observations relating the effectiveness of the display's experiential approach. If the deliberate process of identification is to truly work (which Koosed asserts that it does), then visitors *are* brought into the emotional, if not the actual, experiences of those caught up in the whirlwind of the Second World War–with the exception of the perpetrator. It is only at this point that the process of identification breaks down. For if emotional similitude was truly the goal, given that the vast majority of the USHMM's visitors are *not* Jewish, then the more likely scenario for visitors imagining themselves to in some way identify with those living in Nazi-occupied Europe, would be as bystanders at best, perpetrators at worst or

liberating soldiers. The visitors are indeed the 'witnesses' but they bear witness to only *part* of the story.

The question of who the 'I', who the 'speaker' is, is also complex. Koosed asks us to consider that the speaker in the quotation is the museum, and then asserts that the USHMM, as a government institution, speaks only for the state, which she then equates with the US Government. While it is true that the USHMM is a partially federally funded institution, there is no expectation that it will act as a government mouthpiece. The history of the museum shows that while it is certainly not immune from political influence, there have also been significant moments in public ceremonies and in the permanent exhibition itself where the USHMM has been critical of both past and present US government directives.[96] In not making this distinction, Koosed conflates the speaker and the prophet (God and Isaiah), with the result that 'the museum acts as a spokesperson for the government and the government moves into the place of the Divine'.[97]

There is another possibility; the speaker could also be the Holocaust victim(s), the memory of whom visitors are constantly extolled to recollect in their pathway through the USHMM's memorial and exhibition spaces. If the speaker is the Holocaust victim, rather that the 'government' as Koosed asserts, the radical nature of this shift can only be fully grasped through a consideration of the original biblical text. A review of the 'plain sense' of the verse highlights the profound shift in meaning that is enabled through the dislocation of the verse in its Hall of Witness setting. Isaiah 43:10 is part of a longer segment of the prophetic text in which the theology of 'chosenness', personified in the relationship between YHWH and Israel, is recalled and expanded upon. The act of 'witnessing' is the necessary corollary of 'chosenness' in the original verse, which reads:

> You are My Witnesses, declares the Lord
> My servant, whom I have chosen
> (Isaiah 43:10)

As YHWH's 'treasured possession', the Children of Israel act as witnesses to God's presence on earth, their ethical and ritual conduct evidence of their fidelity. Understood thus, Isaiah's pronouncement is a recollection of the covenantal moment, of Sinai, and a reminder of its eternal injunctions. However, if we read the 'I' in this quotation to be the Holocaust victim, rather than YHWH, and the 'You' to be the USHMM's visitors – the undifferentiated 'community of man' rather than the covenantal 'community of Israel' – then a radical 'New Testament' has indeed been proclaimed; one in which 'spirit has become flesh' but not

simply the flesh of one, but of many – the millions who were consumed by fire not *al Kiddush HaShem* (for the sake of His Name)[98] – but rather, as visitors, will be instructed, for the sake of humanity.

If we understand the speaker to be the victim(s) and the addressees to be the visitors, then the quotation as it appears in the Hall of Witness also allows for a more universal reading of the identity of both. Chosenness in the USHMM rendering of the quotation is not as clearly defined as it is in the original biblical text. For those who wish to read in the quotation a more particularized understanding of who the 'speaker' is, the 'I' can refer to the six million Jewish victims, while for others who prefer a more universalized reading there is sufficient ambiguity to include 'other victims' as well. In the reconfigured quotation, the victims that embody and espouse the negative epiphany of Auschwitz may speak as Jews to Jews, or the 'covenantal community' may be broadened indefinitely. Throughout the built space, but in particular in the debates and final form of the Hall of Remembrance, this ambiguity is maintained and reinforced, ostensibly fulfilling both the needs of the survivors for a space that recalls the memory of the Jewish dead, and the official demand for a more universal memorial message. The space is indeed 'unique and universal' but whether the particular identity of the Jewish dead and the historical complexity of the experience of the Nazis' 'other victims', can be retained in these structures is still open for question.

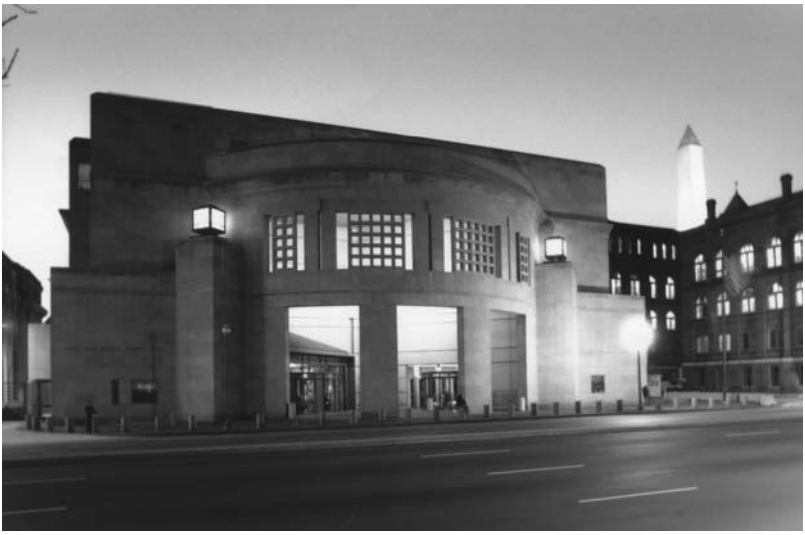

Figure 2.1 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 14th Street Entry

Figure 2.2 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Hall of Witness

Who will Witness and what will be Remembered?

The Hall of Witness and the Hall of Remembrance are spaces dedicated by their very titles to 'witnessing' and 'remembering'. These are key imperatives within the Jewish tradition. To cite but one example, they are found within the Shabbat *kiddush*, a blessing recited weekly in honour of the Shabbat, in which the observant Jew is exhorted to *shamor v' zachor*, to 'guard and remember' the Shabbat. In the liturgical formulation of the *kiddush* blessing, the Shabbat is understood to serve both as an emulation and an affirmation of God's creation of the world and His creation of the People Israel. In their remembrance of these imperatives through ritual observance, the Jewish people uphold their belief in God's creative omnipotence and affirm their particular covenantal relationship. The question must be asked, therefore, in adopting such imperatives as containers of Holocaust memory, exactly what and for what purpose is the USHMM asking its visitors to 'witness and remember'?

To articulate this memory, the USHMM deliberately underscores its memorial architecture with a narrative exhibition approach. In making this choice, the USHMM planning team was aware that they were changing significantly the traditional emphasis of a historical museum from the collection and display of primary sources, to the *utilization* of these sources to tell a particular narrative of events. As previously noted, the

USHMM was not the first museum to consciously utilize this approach, modelled as it was on the Tel Aviv's Beth Hatefutsoth (The Nahum Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora). Indeed, Beth Hatefutsoth came to have a deep influence upon the final shape of the USHMM both inferentially, through the utilization of a narrative approach, and more directly, through the influence of Jeshajahu (Shaike) Weinberg, Beth Hatefutsoth's former director and the USHMM's founding Museum Director.

In the original President's Report, the museum's exhibitions are envisaged not as 'static but designed to elicit an evolving understanding'.[99] Accordingly, a narrative approach was chosen precisely because of its ability to affect its visitors, 'not only intellectually but also emotionally'.[100] A key rationale for employing a narrative exhibition approach is to add a didactic and experiential element to the museum visit. In the reading that follows, selected sections of the USHMM permanent exhibition are analysed to reveal how the exhibition's narrative exposition works toward this goal while concurrently underpinning the broader messages of 'witnessing' and 'remembering'. In giving these ancient imperatives contemporary voice, the narrative works to support the institution's overwhelmingly memorial intent and the overarching metahistorical vision of the Holocaust as 'negative epiphany' is reinforced. Through the skilful interplay of this narrative exposition within a powerful memorial framework, the genocide of European Jewry is transfigured into a redemptive vision, imbuing the USHMM with the 'transformative ability' it was officially instructed to create.

A museum exhibit, especially one of the size and scope of the USHMM, is built by a team, not by an individual. In a narrative exhibition approach the historical arc, rather than the museum collection, forms the bedrock of the display. During the planning and development phase of the USHMM, this proclivity was underscored by the choice of Shaike Weinberg, a pioneer in narrative historical exhibitions, directing an exhibition team headed by British filmmaker, Martin Smith (later replaced by Raye Farr, also a producer of historical documentaries) with theologian/historian Michael Berenbaum as the lead historical expert. These key individuals, none of whom came from a traditional curatorial background, worked in tandem with exhibition designer Ralph Appelbaum to form the core exhibition planning team. Together, they shaped a narrative exposition of the Holocaust that supported the overarching memorial intent of the USHMM.

It is impossible to recount every instance of narrative storytelling in an exhibit the size of the USHMM. Nor does what follows pretend to be

exhaustive with regard to the variety of curatorial and design techniques utilized – the variety and depth of the displays is certainly part of the exhibition's effectiveness. What follows, therefore, is a brief overview of the exhibition, an examination of the portrayal of 'other victims' and a consideration of the final section of the exhibit; the Auschwitz diorama and the survivor testimony utilized in this and the concluding sections of the display. These examples serve to clearly illustrate how the USHMM's 'negative epiphany' continues into the museum's narrative exhibition approach. What becomes evident is that despite the flexibility and power of this metahistorical vision, the 'unique and universal' framework still sidelines the experiences of 'other victims' and serves to ultimately erase even the particular identity of its Jewish victims in its pursuit of a 'universal message'.

The USHMM's permanent exhibition covers three floors of the building and incorporates within its narrative approach the use of hundreds of original artifacts, film footage (including testimony), photography and text. Comprised of three main sections, 'Nazi Assault', 'Final Solution' and 'Last Chapter', the exhibition is directive and unrelenting – visitors must go through the entire exhibition to eventually exit the building. The beginning displays set the story in a broad historical framework, detailing the central Nazi ideologies of race science and radical antisemitism and exploring their connections. The stories of 'other victims' are included in this section, however, the central narrative remains the Nazi assault upon the Jewish populations of Germany and Austria. Commentators such as Amy Sodaro, in an article outlining the struggle for Romany inclusion in the USHMM narrative, read this treatment as indicative of the overall struggle for inclusion by other victim groups. A struggle in which the story of Nazism's 'other victims' is always characterized as peripheral to and *in competition* with the central narrative of the destruction of European Jewry.[101]

While Sodaro rightly acknowledges that the scale and reasoning behind the Nazi persecution of the Romany (and other victim groups) is not comparable in either force, or ideological centrality to the Nazi persecution of Europe's Jews,[102] her overall point in highlighting the importance of the struggle for Romany inclusion in the USHMM narrative is compelling. In a museum with an explicit mission to forge moral understanding from the explication and consideration of extreme persecution, the marginalization of the experience of 'other victims' stands as an anomaly.[103] While political pressures surely played a large role in the history of such decisions,[104] what has been under-recognized is the

role of the 'unique and universal' paradigm in creating and maintaining this imbalance. For once the history of the Holocaust is encased within this metahistorical shell, its content is necessarily changed. In the case of the USHMM, the framework of 'negative epiphany' not only insists on the centrality of the Jewish narrative as a historical imperative, but also credits it with the ability to provide 'access' to the 'mystery' of the Holocaust experience.[105] Thus while the centrality of Jewish persecution in the Nazi campaign is historically correct, its metahistorical centrality in the USHMM's vision and display of this history means that 'the nuances and complexities of Nazi forms of persecution of each group are simplified, highlighting only the difference between the experience of the Jews and all others'.[106]

This proclivity is underscored in the second section of the display, where the chronological exposition gives way to a more thematic exposition outlining the major topics of ghettoes, deportations, concentration camps and extermination. At this point in the exhibit, the visitors' experiential identification is focussed toward the Jewish victim, marked for death by the Nazi regime. Exiting an original rail car, which sits on rails taken from the station at the Treblinka death camp, visitors walk through a scaled reproduction of the infamous archway gate of Auschwitz, on which the words '*Arbeit Macht Frei*' (work sets you free) are inscribed. Surrounding displays exhibit the remains of shoes, glasses and personal belongings of Nazi victims from a variety of concentration and death camps, but mainly from Majdanek, the camp left most 'intact' due to its relatively early liberation by Soviet troops. The subjection of the objects to the demands of the narrative is clearly evident. The exact provenance of each artifact is of secondary importance, the desired effect of the objects is to guide visitors toward an understanding and experience of *the* death camp, the camp that has become synonymous with the Holocaust – Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Visitors continue along the exhibition path to be confronted by the opening panel, headed with words from the *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) liturgy, announcing 'Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die'. In the *Yom Kippur* service, the prayer invokes fear or 'awe' in the face of the numinous and mysterious will of God. The penitent, through a process of *tshuvah* (repentance), invokes the mercy of God with the hope of being granted another year of life and the opportunity to start again with a clean slate. In the exhibition, the fear is the fear of the anti-God and visitors are being prepared to witness a very different kind of selection process, the selection process that awaits the unsuspecting victim at the ramp at Auschwitz. In this revelation, who shall live and

who shall die is decided not by the Maker of Heaven and Earth, but by Berenbaum's 'anti-God'.

At Sinai, the Children of Israel hear but do not see the Divine, for to do so would cause certain death (Exodus 19:21). Similarly, as they approach the death camp section of the display visitors can only hear the negative revelation of Auschwitz in an audio theatre where survivor testimonies recount their experiences of arrival and selection at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The voices are *not* the voices of those who will actually experience the negative revelation of the gas chambers and ovens of Auschwitz. To hear these voices is impossible. Rather, the content of the revelation is relayed by those who have gone as close as possible to the fire, the survivors; those like Moses, who have 'seen God face to face' (Exodus 33:23) and yet lived. Thus, the survivor is lifted to the position of the prophet in this particular revelation, her word the word of one who has 'seen God and lived'; only the God she has seen is the anti-God and the revelation is the revelation of the 'anti-Man'. The displacement is both seamless and significant. The voice of the survivor is also the voice of those who do not survive. The negative epiphany of Auschwitz cannot be encountered 'face to face', but it can be relayed by those who have approached the 'strange fire' without being consumed.

To achieve this conflation between the murdered and surviving victim, audio rather than video testimony is utilized in this section of the exhibit. The voice speaks 'as if' the survivor is in Auschwitz, yet in actuality survivor testimony is always *after the fact*, always a recollection of an eyewitness account. This literal 'disembodiment' allows the resonance of the Holocaust to speak beyond its time; the survivors speak *for* themselves but also for the dead and in so doing the victims are literally and figuratively lifted from history as they call from the past to the present. The use of audio rather than video testimony intensifies this effect as it removes the historical distance that would be incurred if the survivors' post-war images were also apparent. It is with *both* the murdered and the surviving victim, therefore, that visitors simultaneously identify with and *bear witness to* in this concluding section of the display.

Finally, after careful preparation through this series of 'approaches', visitors enter into the diorama section. Original artifacts are set aside in preference for a scale model of the selection and murder process at Auschwitz, commissioned by Polish sculptor Jan Stobierski, a recreation of a model on display at the Auschwitz museum.[107] In excruciating detail, visitors view a *reproduction* of the culminating revelation – actual

witnessing is an impossibility – and thus both the historical integrity and the mysterious quality of the events it describes but cannot ever truly recreate are upheld. Through the use of a model, Auschwitz is knowable but not, the murder of its victims is replicated but never actually seen; only to be witnessed through the witnesses, those in the liminal position of having seen the anti-God and lived. Thus, while the story of the Jewish victim is (correctly) historically privileged in this section of the display, the metahistorical import afforded to this experience lifts it out of the realm of history and into the realm of metahistory. As such, the experience of Nazism's 'other victims' is no longer considered in a comparative, historical mode. Rather, their place is determined by their relationship to a 'sacred mystery' – a 'unique' event in which the stories of others can only be considered within the framework of 'universal' connotations, and not on their own terms.

Through basing its definition of 'chosenness/uniqueness' in Jewish suffering rather than Jewish service, the USHMM's 'negative epiphany' radically changes the original understanding of this complex theology. The 'special relationship' of Israel to YHWH in its biblical context does *not* preclude other such relationships (Amos 9:7). 'Chosenness' may well dictate a distinctive relationship but it does not obligate God to an exclusive one. In other words, the Israelites must remain faithful to the terms of their relationship (covenant) but their God can and does form different relationships with others. In its original sense, therefore, there is no contradiction between the particular relationship of Israel to her God and an understanding that this relationship is linked to a universal vision. However, in endowing Jewish suffering with meta-historical import, the USHMM has radically shifted this theodicy to a structure in which Jewish suffering is the *only* 'way into' the sacred mystery of the Holocaust – not simply its most extreme manifestation. As evidenced in the main display, this metahistorical vision results in the inevitable sidelining of 'other victims'. It also, as we shall now see, ultimately erases the Jewish particularity of the 'chosen victims'. For in its final, memorial culmination in the Hall of Remembrance, the profound implications of this metahistorical transformation find their fullest expression. In this unambiguously 'redemptive space' the legitimate need and desire to mourn Jewish losses 'Jewishly' – a need that Jewish survivors fought to retain – is obscured as Jewish suffering, rather than Jewish service, becomes the 'unique' conduit to a 'universal' redemption.

Figure 2.3 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Voices from Auschwitz

A Universal Redemption

Relieved only slightly by vertical window strips, the severe exterior of the Hall of Remembrance closes the building in, leaving the interior largely hidden from outside view. The hexagonal structure references the other 'Stars of David' found in triangular structures throughout the building, from the ceiling of the Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Theatre to the refracted light emanating at varying points in the day from the skylights in the Hall of Witness. The Hall is filled with light from the hexagonal dome – an idea that came to Freed upon hearing survivors remark that the sky was the only place that was truly free in the camps. The decision to flood the space with light is uncommon in memorial spaces, which are usually kept deliberately dark or at least shaded, to create a reflective and sombre mood.[108] Compounded by glimpses of the Jefferson Memorial and the Washington Monument discernible through the narrow windows it is little wonder that the space has been characterized as 'redemptive'. But what, exactly, is the content of this redemption?

The Hall of Remembrance completes the memorial and narrative arc of the USHMM and thus brings to an end the transformation it is intended that visitors undergo – providing a place for respite but also reflection. But who or what are visitors being asked to remember in this final space – and to what purpose? Through an examination of the debates that led to the Hall's development, a consideration of Freed's own architectural vision and a 'reading' of the space with particular emphasis on the final three biblical quotes it contains, we will see that the USHMM's 'negative epiphany' comes to its full articulation in this memorial space. To enable a universal redemption, any allusions to the Hall as a particularly 'Jewish' space must be implicit rather than explicit and the particularity of the Jewish victims is sustained only in their identity as victims, not as Jews. As such, it is Jewish suffering, rather than a Jewish covenantal worldview, that will provide the basis for the USHMM's universal redemption. Culminating in the Hall of Remembrance, the Jewish narratives of revelation and chosenness that underscore the USHMM's metahistorical vision are transfigured and transformed; and the suffering of European Jewry emerges as a timeless and universal message for all.

This process of transfiguration begins with the architecture. The Hall contains the fullest statement of Freed's 'fractured Star' in the hexagonal skylight dome, but even here the symbolic nod to the Jewish nature of the space is deliberately abstracted, creating a memorial in which Jewish symbolism is subtly modified in order to ensure that a universalistic message is continually propounded. This is not surprising given that the original plans for a dedicated Hall of Remembrance were only tangentially connected to traditional Jewish forms of commemoration:

> A room with the ashes of some of the martyrs, a large blow up of the Memorial Prayer in Hebrew and soft chanting in the background. This might be part of a larger meditation or prayer room.[109]

Arguably, the only 'Jewish' element described above is the mention of the Memorial Prayer. Displays of ashes, while clearly resonant of the Holocaust, are far from a traditional Jewish form of commemoration of the dead as the tradition explicitly forbids cremation. However, as plans developed over many years, the multi-purpose space seemed to lose any explicitly Jewish elements:

> The Hall of Remembrance would provide individuals and groups with a profoundly moving environment for contemplation and

> personal commemoration. A light spacious area, this Hall must make an aesthetic and moral statement that evokes an emotional response from all those who enter. It is here that the Council's annual Days of Remembrance ceremonies would take place. Here too, would be commemorative services marking the visits of American and foreign dignitaries and other special guests.[110]

Clearly, the Hall of Remembrance had to fulfil a variety of purposes – from official functions to individual contemplation. It also had to provide a suitable end to the museum's permanent exhibition and afford respite from a horrific history that in reality contained no such consolation. Given its importance, the character and content of the Hall of Remembrance became a matter of heated debate among members of the USHMM Council. In particular, the 'Jewishness' of the space became a hotly contested issue. The debate came to a head in the correspondence between a survivor, Dr Laszlo N. Tauber, and then chairman of the USHMC, Elie Wiesel.

In a letter dated 23 May 1984, Tauber accepted the leadership of the Museum's Building Steering committee, a body charged with bringing about the design and building of what was to become the USHMM.[111] Relations began to sour over what Tauber refers to as the 'purpose of the building'. For Tauber and other survivors who supported his position, the museum ground was considered sacred – a space where the memory of the six million Jewish victims must be honoured. Only a month before accepting the position as Chairman of the Museum Building Steering Committee, he spoke these words at the symbolic groundbreaking ceremony:

> We gathered here today for a symbolic ground breaking ceremony to dedicate a museum which will be viewed by many…They will hear the voice of God; they will sense this as a holy place. For us, the ever decreasing number of survivors of the Holocaust, this will be our *Kever Ovausz* (Grave).[112]

Tauber became increasingly dismayed by what he saw as a desecration of Jewish memory in the Hall of Remembrance. He is clear, in his letter dated 10 September 1986, that the 10,000 square feet originally planned for the Hall of Remembrance (from a total square footage of 275,000 for the entire complex) should remain a 'memorial for our people'.[113] Tauber's insistence, based on the argument that the Jewish victims should not have to share the space with other victim groups that may

have also been persecutors of Jews throughout the Holocaust, found resonance with other survivors on the Council as well.[114]

As is often the result in architectural projects where consensus was unobtainable, the final form of the space was abstracted so as to lend itself to many interpretations. By Freed's own admission, the Hall of Remembrance works on many levels, particularly its hexagonal shape and skylight which 'survivors could, of course, read as a Star of David, thereby consecrating the area as a Jewish space'.[115] As with all aspects of Freed's creation, the Hall's hexagonal design suggests rather than dictates its manifold meanings:

> A hexagonal shaped memorial, the Hall of Remembrance, will feature a hexagonal pyramidal sky-lit ceiling. This is a spiritual space designed to be a place for contemplation and reflection … The hexagon evokes the memory of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust.[116]

Perhaps due to its very ambiguity, so too the response of critics to the space was varied. Some automatically assumed the space was based on Jewish understandings of 'sacred space', others found more universal metaphors:

> The Hall possesses an uncanny air of the holy, of the sacredly set apart. Though it is intended to serve a non-denominational purpose, it is assuredly a tabernacle, a word whose root meaning we are prompted to recall, is a tent – in particular the tent which the Jewish people carried through the desert and used as a temple. The Hall of Remembrance is the crown of Freed's achievement in the design of this building. He has no reason to fear that visitors will fail to find in it metaphors of loss and consolation appropriate to their needs.[117]

The USHMM's own description of the space avoids any mention of specifically Jewish aspects of the Hall; even the hexagonal dome is renamed the 'Rose Window'. In the museum's web definition, what defines this space is 'memory, above all'.[118] Whose memory and what purpose remembering serves is not explicitly stated and even the most clearly identifiable Jewish ritual – that of the lighting of memorial candles – is carefully recast in this description as a 'sign of remembrance in many cultures,' a universal ritual.[119]

The contested space of the Hall of Remembrance provides a microcosm of the broader debates outlined in the preceding section – that is, who are the primary victims of the Holocaust and how do we

best remember them? For some survivors, the Hall of Remembrance needed to be the one, exclusively 'Jewish' space in the museum. An elementary reading of the space clearly illustrates that their wish was not granted. However, through the use of symbolic architecture and biblical imprimatur, it is evident that the ambiguity of 'chosen victimhood', first propounded through the words of Isaiah in the Hall of Witness, is continued and developed in the Hall of Remembrance. In this process, the space is rendered abstract enough to be read as 'Jewish' for those who wish to do so and left open for the inclusion of 'other victims' as required. However, while the 'Jewishness' of the victims may be discerned in the space, their 'Jewishness' is only to be found in the memory of their suffering, not in the commemoration of that suffering within a broader context of Jewish belief and identity. The paradoxical result of subsuming Jewish memory within a revelation of suffering, rather than a revelation of service, is that those who suffered will ultimately be remembered *without* rather than within Jewish history.

The universal nature of the USHMM's 'negative epiphany' is continued in the choice of quotations that surround visitors in the Hall of Remembrance: Genesis 4:10, Deuteronomy 4:9 and Deuteronomy 30:19. The quotations are instructive and speak with the authority of Scripture. One distinction between Scripture and other forms of writing is its Divine imprimatur and the acceptance of its Divine authority by a given religious community. Unlike other forms of literature, scripture also retains its authority over time; for example, the covenant at Sinai was a covenant made at one time, for all time, and its stipulations, therefore, still stand according to the Jewish tradition. In literally 'framing' the Hall with the authority of Scripture while absenting an explicitly 'theistic' element, the events the quotations speak of and to are also understood to be revelatory, and therefore meaningful, across time and space. In employing the authoritative voice of Scripture, the 'negative epiphany' of Auschwitz announced in the Hall of Witness and articulated in the narrative exhibition is finally 'lifted' from history itself and proclaimed as a message for all time in the Hall of Remembrance.

The Genesis quotation recounts God's accusation to Cain regarding the murder of his brother: 'Hark, thy brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.' Who is speaking and who is being accused is again not clear. As with the opening quotation from Isaiah in the Hall of Witness, there are several possibilities. It is significant that this story comes from the more 'universalistic' section of Genesis – the prehistory and the section before there is any mention of a covenantal relationship

to one person (Abraham) or one people (Israel). Thus, the quotation speaks of and to humanity at large – and as such it is perhaps the most accusatory moment in the display – perhaps the only point at which visitors are asked to reflect on the possibility that, given different circumstances, they too could have been perpetrators. Given the positioning of the quotation near the eternal flame, the evidence of the crime is all too clear:

> Here lies earth gathered from death camps, concentration camps, sites of mass execution, and ghettos in Nazi-occupied Europe, and from the cemeteries of American soldiers who fought and died to defeat Nazi Germany.[120]

The central quotation, Deuteronomy 4:9 reads:

> Only guard yourself and guard your soul carefully, lest you forget the things your eyes saw, and lest these things depart your heart all the days of your life, and you shall make them known to your children, and to your children's children.

To the right is the final quotation, Deuteronomy 30:19:

> I call heaven and earth to witness this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life – that you and your offspring shall live.

The common theme of the three quotations continues the theme of 'witnessing'. The Deuteronomy quotations, however, also speak of remembrance – witnessing's necessary corollary.

Again, a reconsideration of the quotations in their original context is instructive. In the USHMM version Deuteronomy 30:19 is altered from its biblical form. In the original, 'heaven and earth' are called to 'witness *against you*', an explicit reference to the radical responsibility the Israelites take on in accepting the covenant. Indeed, the Deuteronomy quotations are a direct reference to revelation, to the covenant, its stipulations, and the variety of rewards and punishments that follow as a result of either adherence to or rejection of the Sinaitic pact. Stripped of its original addressee (the Israelites), its normative content (the *mitzvot* – commandments) and deity (YHWH), the quotations in the Hall of Remembrance do not stipulate exactly 'what' should be taught to your 'children and your children's children', nor is it clear

what visitors are 'choosing' in choosing life – a term that in its biblical sense and certainly its later rabbinic interpretation means to choose a life lived according to the *halacha* – normative Jewish law.

However, if we again envisage the speaker to be the Holocaust victim(s) and the addressee the visitors, then this is a 'strange fire' indeed. Witnessing and remembering in this context is to witness and remember the consummation through fire of the covenantal community. Yet the Jewish tradition has never made gods of its martyrs. On the contrary, it made martyrs for God. The peculiar nature of Nazi persecution rendered traditional Jewish definitions of martyrdom obsolete, even the choice to die *al Kiddush HaShem* was stripped from the victims due to the Nazi system of racial classification. To relinquish one's Jewish identity through conversion was no longer a choice; therefore neither denial nor affirmation of Jewish identity was possible.

Yet in the Hall of Remembrance it is the martyrs that speak the loudest, demanding to be witnessed. But what is the purpose of this martyrdom? What is the meaning attributed to Jewish suffering in this space? In this context, the meaning of Jewish suffering does not accord with previous historical persecutions, for example, the martyrdom of the Sages during the Roman persecutions in first- and second-century Palestine. The most famous of these martyrs, Rabbi Akiva, suffered for

Figure 2.4 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Hall of Remembrance

the sake of God's name – as a witness to God's presence and the ongoing covenant between God and Israel. In the USHMM, the modern martyrs suffer for the sake of humanity. In this new revelation, the victims are relieved of their particular identity and the memory of their suffering finds its ultimate redemption in a world in which justice and ethical action provide the covenantal imperatives. No longer a Jewish memory but rather a memory of Jewish suffering provides the basis for a new revelation.

Conclusion: A New Covenant

The development and ongoing evolution of the USHMM has been extremely influential in forging the 'shape' of Holocaust memory in the United States. The institution has grown exponentially since its opening in 1993 to encompass an academic and research centre, a dedicated pedagogic wing, an activist portfolio embodied in the 'Committee on Conscience' as well as a dynamic programme of temporary exhibitions, commemorative events and public programmes.[121] A significant marker in the growth of Holocaust consciousness in the United States, the opening of the museum, coinciding with the release of Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List,* led some commentators to label 1993 as 'the year of the Holocaust'.[122] In its wake, a spate of films, publications, Holocaust museums and memorials seemed to vindicate the view that, finally, America and American Jewry in particular had indeed 'discovered the Holocaust'. However, more recent studies point toward the fact that the 'discovery' of the Holocaust in American life was not as late or as sudden as once presumed.

Hasia Diner's landmark study, *We Remember with Reverence and Love,* is an explicit attempt to refute the 'myth of silence' regarding American Jewish remembrance of the Holocaust. Railing against prevailing scholarly opinion that 'until the 1960s – as a result of the Eichmann trial early in the decade or the June 1967 Six-Day War in Israel – the story of Europe's destroyed Jews lay hidden through deliberate forgetting',[123] Diner presents an extensive array of primary source materials to support her thesis that Holocaust remembrance in American Jewish communities in the immediate post-war period was not only clearly evident, but at once intensive and extensive. While Diner's main intent is to defend the post-war Jewish community from the common accusations of 'silence' that have dominated both scholarly and popular discourse surrounding the development of Holocaust memory in American life, it is the nature of the commemorations she unearths that are of interest

for the purposes of this study. For what is possibly most striking about the materials that Diner collects and presents are their diversity and their *lack of agreement* as to the *meaning* of Holocaust memory in the American context.

Unlike forms of Holocaust commemoration post- 1970 (with the USHMC and USHMM providing a case in point), no consensus was needed or sought with regard to commemorative strategies in the immediate post-war period. The result was a vast array of Holocaust commemorations that might best be described as grassroots in character. Moreover, within these commemorations, the understanding of the Holocaust as a *sui generis*, unique and an unprecedented destruction was only one interpretation among many. In fact, Diner notes that, 'presenting the Holocaust as the most recent link in a seemingly endless chain of Jewish suffering appeared everywhere in American Jewish public life, and these texts reminded American Jews that they had inherited that history'.[124] Diner amasses an impressive range of sources to support her claim, with the speeches, pamphlets and scholarship of Jewish professional and lay leaders providing ample evidence that *continuity* was as prevalent a theme in post-war American Jewish Holocaust remembrance, if not more so, than rupture or uniquness. Indeed, classical Jewish archetypical tropes of destruction featured prominently in these early years of commemoration.[125] The Holocaust, while devastating in scope and reach, was still part of a familiar Jewish story – a story that reached back into ancient times, befitting the traditional Yiddish appellation *der dritter hurban* – the Third Destruction.[126]

What Diner's work illustrates is that as long as American Holocaust commemoration remained a largely internal affair – dominated by the concerns of the (always heterogeneous) Jewish community – its diversity was assured. It is with the entry of the Holocaust into the broader American context that the demand for a more singular message was increasingly heard. Uniqueness was not a 'hot button' issue for post-war American Jewry because the conversation surrounding Holocaust commemoration remained largely private. When Holocaust memory did penetrate outside of the Jewish community it did so in ways that intersected or bolstered other Jewish American concerns, like the plight of Soviet Jewry or even the public perception of post-war Germany. Tracking these developments, Diner convincingly illustrates that American Jews in the immediate post-war period did not 'forget' the Holocaust; rather, they simply told the story in very different ways and with a very different audience in mind. As such, the 'exceptionality' of

the Holocaust was only one interpretation among many, and was still conceived of as predominantly a 'Jewish issue'. In other words, those active in earlier forms of Holocaust commemoration were struggling to assess whether the Holocaust was exceptional, or at least qualitatively different from, prior persecutions in Jewish history, not whether it constituted a universal, 'watershed Event'. These early commemorations encompassed a diverse memorial landscape that was a far cry from the unique and universal framework that now dominates Holocaust discourse not only at the USHMM but also in the broader, American and American Jewish contexts.

How and why Holocaust memory in its American context developed from a heterogeneous, largely private memory to a more singular, but vastly more public one is beyond the scope of this book. What reflection on the underlying metahistorical shape of Holocaust memory at the USHMM offers is one example of how this transformation was achieved and what its implications were and are for the development and role of Holocaust memory in American life. As the President's Commission undertook its task, its members had to pose and answer questions with which earlier commemorative bodies simply did not have to reckon. The central dilemma Commissioners had to confront was the wisdom and the implications of placing what to some was a clearly Jewish memory in a public and arguably 'sacred' civic space. As such, once understood as constituting a 'national trust', the memory of the Holocaust in its American context would have to be radically rethought. As witnessed in the original discussions of the President's Commission, this was no easy task and presented perhaps the greatest challenge for those who sought to implant the Holocaust into America's national narrative. Unique and universal, the secular articulation of the Holocaust as negative epiphany became the metahistorical framework within which this historic struggle took place.

As inevitable as it might now seem, this framework is really only one of many that could have been utilized. For example, as Diner writes of the fluidity and diversity of the immediate post-war period of commemoration:

> In their publications and speeches, these American Jews differed among themselves as to how best narrate the catastrophe and what lessons should be derived from it. … they experimented with language, texts, images, and pageantry, casting about for answers to some ineffable questions: Why did it happen? Did it constitute a

> new reality, or did it represent 'merely' the latest and worst link in a long chain of Jewish suffering? How did the destruction of the six million impinge on their American lives? How did it structure their relationships to other Jewries? How did it define their connection to Palestine, then Israel? What constituted heroism and resistance? Where had God been?[127]

As outlined in this chapter, the struggles of the President's Commission, the USHMC and the professional staff who would eventually build the USHMM were a long way from such considerations. In stark contrast to the far more internal concerns of earlier commemorations, the questions that beset those who would build the USHMM were generated by external imperatives. Subsequently, their deliberations started not *within* Jewish history but without; the questions they asked and the answers they developed were, by necessity, very different from those of their predecessors. How and why should this memory become an American memory? Why should the broader American public care about a genocide perpetrated on foreign soil? These were also questions that, once addressed, would not stay neatly stored away.

Indeed, the tenacity of these debates was perhaps most clearly evidenced in the conflicts surrounding the planning for the 1993 opening ceremonies. Strikingly, even at this late juncture, the Commission and Council's early disputes concerning the conceptualization of the Holocaust as unique and universal remained unresolved. Ongoing tensions were perhaps most clearly explicated in a letter from Benjamin Meed, one of the survivors most deeply involved in both the development and then ongoing functioning of the institution, to the then Council Chairman, Harvey (Bud) Meyerhoff.

> I am deeply troubled, however, by what I see and sense. It seems that the emphasis for the Museum opening has been placed upon appealing to the general public without acknowledging the very heart of this Museum. On behalf of the survivors, it would appear that we are an embarrassment, that we must be hidden in order not to discourage the general public from coming to a 'Jewish museum'. I would like to avoid this impression. We cannot afford to antagonize our main constituency. Yes, this is an American museum, and it should remain so; but its purpose and uniqueness should never be jeopardized. … Specifically regarding the Days of Remembrance civic commemoration ceremony, it has been our practice to chant

> the *El Moleh Rachamim*, and the *Kaddish* be recited. These are universally recognized symbols of respect for the dead, and, I believe, they must be included. Another traditional part of the national ceremony is the Partisan's Hymn, which is sung before the flags are retired …[128]

Meed's letter clearly articulates a sense of alienation among survivors regarding both their role in the opening ceremonies and the nature of the ceremonies themselves. What is most striking, however, is that he couches his desire for explicitly Jewish commemorative content through appealing to its universal nature, going so far as to assert that traditional Jewish mourning prayers are somehow also 'universally recognized symbols of respect for the dead'. Commission and Council member Rabbi Dr Alfred Gottshalk expressed similar sentiments in a letter to Meyerhoff in which he outlines his concerns about the feelings of the survivors and also the 'appropriateness' of some ceremonies taking place in explicitly non-Jewish settings such as the National Cathedral.[129] For both Gottshalk and Meed, it is evident that while they are convinced of the universal importance of the USHMM, the uniqueness of the Jewish experience contained therein is perceived as continually in jeopardy. For them and others, the institution's overarching and universalistic framework slowly but surely envelops and overtakes the museum's 'Jewish core'. Their fears, it seems, were not without foundation.

The challenge that the USHMM's founders faced was immense: how to integrate a European and Jewish memory into the sacred heartland of America? That the institution has achieved this goal is undeniable; as an established leader in Holocaust and genocide research, and a significant player in placing genocide into American and indeed global, political agendas, the USHMM stands as an outstanding example of what the modern 'activist' museum can achieve. The negative epiphany of Auschwitz enabled the Holocaust to become an orienting force in such debates, a focal point from which all similar debates would be measured.

Yet while the power of this metahistorical vision is undeniable, so too are its limitations unavoidable. Once uncovered, the negative epiphany of Auschwitz in its unique and universal, secular garb serves not only to marginalize those other victims whose distinctive experiences can then only be considered in relation to the unique suffering of the Jews, but also results (somewhat paradoxically) in the obfuscation of any positive sense of Jewish particularity. In other words,

Jewish suffering will only be remembered at the USHMM in relation to its universal resonance. Its particular, significance – epitomized in the desire expressed by Jewish survivors to remember 'Jewishly' – is rendered largely invisible in this predominantly universal space. The result has been the elevation of the Holocaust as a universal, humanitarian symbol but a decided decrease in the diversity of meanings that this memory might hold in both the American and the Jewish American public spheres. Indeed, so overwhelming is the USHMM's unique and universal model that the earlier forms of Holocaust remembrance that Diner resurrects simply fade into the background in light of this centralized and dynamic force.

The negative epiphany of Auschwitz, evoked through mystery and silence by Wiesel, given voice by Berenbaum, and brought to final form by those who would eventually build the architecture and displays of the USHMM, provides an arresting metahistorical framework upon which to build a message for all humanity. For both Wiesel and Berenbaum, the interpretive frame of the classical Jewish corpus is so strong that it is impossible to try and forge meaning from Auschwitz without it. In insisting that previous Jewish responses to destruction cannot contain the mystery and significance of the Holocaust, however, they must ultimately stand outside of tradition, invoking the *memory of the suffering* rather than the *relationship* of that suffering to a pre-existing covenantal worldview, as the orienting axis for a new revelation. Jewish suffering has yet again become the conduit for a new, universal morality but this time the suffering is not of an individual but *of and through* a collective. Within this framework, the largely nihilistic and cruel litany of suffering that perhaps best describes the historical reality of the Holocaust is recast to form a clarion call to all humanity – a new revelation – a message from one time, for all time. The uniqueness of Jewish suffering provides the revelatory content, while its covenantal obligations are rendered universal. The suffering of the Jews has again been reconfigured to form the foundation for a new revelation. Paradoxically, in this transformation, the legitimate desire of Jewish survivors to mourn their particular tragedy has resulted in both the universalization of their story and the unfortunate marginalization of the stories of others. In rethinking how its underlying metahistorical framework has constrained both its historical and memorial potential, the USHMM may yet be able to honour the need of Jewish survivors to mourn in an authentically 'Jewish space' while also finally allowing for the consideration of the experience of other victims on their own terms. For as an early newspaper opinion piece

commenting on the opening of the USHMM keenly noted, the risks of not doing so are readily apparent.

> It could be argued that the crucifixion of Jesus was once a single example of Jewish martyrdom. When it became a metaphor for universal suffering and salvation, it was the Jews, to whom Jesus was bound by history, who became strangers in the world their religion had helped to create.[130]

3
From Tent to Temple: Resurrection in Jerusalem

> I will put my breath into you and you shall live again,
> and I will set you upon your own soil
>
> (Ezekiel 37:14)

> Remember what Amalek did to you…
>
> (Deuteronomy 25:17)

Introduction

Enshrining the Prophet Ezekiel's vision into law, the Holocaust Remembrance and Heroism Law, Yad Vashem, 5713–1953, section 4 seeks to bestow upon Jews who were exterminated, and those who fell in the Holocaust and in uprising, commemorative citizenship of the State of Israel as a sign of their ingathering unto their nation.[1] This remarkable piece of legislation reverberates with the sacred archetype of resurrection, a theology that finds its roots in the *Tenach*, its fullest exposition in rabbinic literature and its continued expression in the recitation each day by observant Jews of the *Amidah*, *Shmoneh Esreh*, or *Tefillah* – the 'Eighteen Benedictions' that comprise the central prayer of the daily and Sabbath liturgy. The related concept of the 'ingathering of the Exiles', the national restoration of the Jewish people in their ancient homeland, also finds its beginnings in Ezekiel's famous vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones. In the biblical context, the prophet's vision points to the hoped-for end of the Babylonian exile and the actual, physical return of the Exiles to Jerusalem.[2] The Remembrance and Heroism Law speaks of another kind of resurrection – of those whose physical bodies will never be recovered – a resurrection of memory that will be achieved through the collection of documents, objects, photos

and, most of all, names, the millions of names of Holocaust victims that it is Yad Vashem's self-declared mission to collect and display. Both visions share a hope for national restoration. For the latter, though, this is not to occur through supernatural means but rather through the political and legal actions of the modern State of Israel.

'The Holocaust Remembrance and Heroism Law – Yad Vashem'[3] announces the need for a physical memorial and proceeds to explicate in exactly whose name it will be founded. The opening section of the legislation lists those to be memorialized and in so doing invokes traditional Jewish concepts pertaining to ideas of 'peoplehood'. The six million European Jews exterminated by the Nazis are referred to in the legislation as 'the House of Jacob who were annihilated by the despot', the 'civilization of Israel' and 'the Jews who in sanctity and purity forfeited their souls on behalf of their people'. The nature of the description becomes only slightly more specific when subgroups, such as 'Jewish soldiers in the armed forces' and 'underground fighters', are invoked. Also specified are the 'Righteous Among the Nations who risked their lives to save Jews'. In the language of the legislation, therefore, the 'participant categories' of the Holocaust are neatly divided into eternal enemies (the despot), victims (martyrs who died 'in sanctity and purity' – *al Kiddush HaShem* (Sanctification of the Name)) and the few rescuers (the Righteous). In bringing attention to these archetypical constructions, the intent is *not* to ascribe a justification for the Nazi genocide, nor to imply that the victims were in any way responsible for their fate. Rather, it is to stress that the memory of the Holocaust in Israel was, from the very beginning, constructed in accord with ancient and metahistorical paradigms that imbued this memory with a timeless – and thus ahistorical – quality. From the outset, therefore, the central question pertaining to Holocaust commemoration in Israel was not *whether* to connect the Holocaust to traditional tropes of commemoration but rather *which* ancient archetypes could adequately express the radical nature of a Diaspora tragedy in the context of a sovereign state.

The archetypical language of the Holocaust Remembrance and Heroism Law emphasizes the *national* and *familial*, rather than the individual, identity of the victims. The victims' historical specificity as European Jews, let alone the diversity of Jewish identity evident within European Jewry prior to the Second World War, is not mentioned. The language connects the particular experience of European Jewry to the People of Israel at large, a characterization perhaps to be expected in a state context. This generalization *en masse* also accords with traditional concepts, such as *k'lal Yisrael* (the community of Israel), and would not

be surprising for anyone well versed in the cultural codes of Jewish civilization. It is not so much the presence of such language that is unusual. What is significant is the metahistorical framework within which it couches Israeli memory of the Holocaust. Revealing the historical formation and most recent manifestation of this metahistorical memory forms the core of the following investigation into the new Historical Museum of Yad Vashem (NHM).[4]

Despite rather grandiose original plans for the Yad Vashem site, the political milieu and economic reality of Israeli life in the early years of the state dictated the building of a vastly scaled-down institution. The first historical museum, not opened until 1973, was a modest venture and the entire complex could rightly have been described as 'unassuming'.[5] Not so in its most recent incarnation. In 2005, Yad Vashem reopened with the new Historical Museum as its monumental centrepiece. The development, building and opening of this massive complex was a landmark in Holocaust remembrance, both in Israel and internationally, and is a striking physical manifestation of the contemporary prominence of Holocaust memory in contemporary Israel and the broader Jewish world. But what is the shape of this memory? How does Yad Vashem's self-declared mission as the official site of national restoration and resurrection both influence and reflect the memory of the Holocaust in contemporary Israeli life – and how has it changed since its somewhat humble and contested beginnings?

This chapter traces how the ancient archetypes underpinning the contours of Holocaust memory at Yad Vashem have developed and changed through an examination of the early history of the institution in conjunction with a close reading of the NHM. At its outset, Yad Vashem's mission to resurrect the memory of the murdered Jews of Europe was achieved through redeeming the destruction of European Jewry by linking this memory to the birth of the modern state. Subsequently, in the old museum complex the ancient and enduring theodicy of Destruction leading to Redemption, was invoked in both the memorial and museum space, epitomized in the central Warsaw Ghetto Square and the wall-sized relief *m'Shoah l'Tkumah* (From *Shoah* to Rebirth),[6] by Naftali Bezem.[7] In this modern retelling of an ancient theodicy, the perceived 'weakness' of Diaspora Jewry was repudiated and thus redeemed. With the opening of the NHM in 2005, Yad Vashem's overarching goal of commemoration through resurrection and national restoration remained intact. However, in this most recent formulation of Israeli Holocaust memory the ancient paradigm of Destruction to Redemption is subtly modified as another ancient archetype is invoked in the name

of contemporary concerns. This chapter locates and uncover this archetype – that of Amalek, the ancient and eternal enemy of the Jewish people – through a consideration of the historical development of the NHM and a close reading of selected sections of the permanent exhibition, including its dramatic climax in the monumental Hall of Names.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the presence of an Amalek archetype was not the express desire of those who formulated the historical and museological foundations of the NHM. Indeed, the historians charged with writing the original, fifty-page historical brief for the NHM expressly reject such a reading, maintaining that 'the museum is meant to set apart the Holocaust from previous destructions'[8] and hence a connection to pre-existing archetypes such as that of Amalek were not in the minds of those who would form and create the museum. Yet, despite these intentions, a museum display – like any representational form once complete – remains open to alternate experiences of reception and interpretation. Yad Vashem is, in this sense, both a reflection of, and a contributor to, the broader framework of Israeli Holocaust memory. Hence, through a close reading of the architecture and displays of the NHM against the backdrop of a changing Israeli memorial landscape, I posit that one such interpretation, where the Holocaust memory housed at Yad Vashem is considered in relation to ancient and enduring Jewish responses to destruction, is not only viable but provides a new perspective for understanding the ongoing efficacy of this memory in Israeli public life.

As planning for the NHM commenced, the changing landscape of Israeli political and civil life demanded new ways of keeping the memory of the Holocaust relevant to an increasingly culturally diverse population, the majority of whom were now two or three generations removed from the event. Furthermore, as Israel's National Remembrance Authority, Yad Vashem is charged with displaying Holocaust memory not only to its own population but to the world at large. In order to achieve these goals, new conceptual frameworks were necessary. The shift outlined in this chapter, from a resurrective vision underpinned by a theodicy of *m'Shoah l'Tkumah,* (Destruction to Rebirth/Redemption) to one underscored by a metahistorical vision of Nazism as the most recent incarnation of Amalek, the 'eternal enemy' of the Jewish people, is, I posit, indicative of a change in the connection between the memory of the Holocaust in Israel and contemporary political concerns. For if the enemy is eternal, then the only response can be eternal vigilance. In such a paradigm, Holocaust memory no longer functions as a vital raison d'être for the existence of the state; it also provides a compelling moral

and practical rationale for its current policies and actions. The existential threat that European Jewry faced throughout the Holocaust, transformed into an eternal struggle through its reformulation in the Amalek paradigm, becomes both implicitly and explicitly linked to the perceived existential threat facing the modern Israeli state. Whether the two actually share a threat of similar magnitude is, of course, a matter for debate. However, as the architecture and displays of the NHM imbue the story of the Holocaust with metahistorical meaning, the Holocaust is lifted from its historical specificity to speak to threats of the present as well as the past. In so doing, a radical reversal of traditional Zionist tropes is achieved. The once-precarious vision of Jewish life in the Diaspora no longer serves as a rationale for the State; rather, the State has come to embody the very precariousness the Zionist movement once reserved only for Jewish life in the Diaspora.

A New Temple in Jerusalem

Unlike the USHMM, Yad Vashem was developed within the context of a Jewish state. By default, therefore, the traditional commemorative tropes of Jewish civilization provided the basis for modern forms of Holocaust remembrance. Yet, as James Young reminds us, traditional frameworks did not always accord with the historical reality of Nazi persecution or the immediate political context of the fledgling state. The traditional proclivity to group all previous historical persecutions into one archetypical frame, underscored by a theodicy of *Mipnei Hataeinu* sat uncomfortably with those who sought to commemorate the Holocaust in the Israeli context due both to its attribution of blame to the victims and its incompatibility with regard to the secular redemptive qualities of the modern state – a state brought about by human rather than divine efforts. For those religious authorities that wished to commemorate the Holocaust on existing traditional days of mourning, the 10th Tevet and the 9th Av, continuity with past persecutions did not present a problem – the victims of the Holocaust would be remembered as having died *al Kiddush HaShem* – as martyrs. However, not only was the possibility of dying *al Kiddush HaShem* an impossibility under Nazi persecution (where conversion to avoid persecution was not an option),[9] but for secular Zionists, the perceived passivity of such a response also sat uncomfortably with a vision of the active 'new Jew' upon which the state was founded.[10]

This conundrum was epitomized in the Knesset debates regarding the choice of a suitable day for Holocaust commemoration. Rabbinical and

secular representatives were at loggerheads until the choice of 27 *Nissan* ameliorated both secular and sacred concerns. As Young writes:

> … by choosing the twenty-seventh of Nissan … the committee dramatically emplotted the entire story of Israel's national rebirth, drawing on a potent combination of religious and national mythologies. ... Beginning on Passover (also the day of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising), continuing through *Yom HaShoah* and ending in *Yom Hatzma'ut*, this period could be seen as commencing with God's deliverance of the Jews and concluding with the Jews' deliverance of themselves in Israel. In this sequence biblical and modern returns to the land of Israel are recalled; God's deliverance of the Jews from the desert of exile is doubled by the Jews' attempted deliverance of themselves in Warsaw; the heroes and martyrs of the *Shoah* are remembered side by side (and implicitly equated) with the fighters who fell in Israel's modern war of liberation; and all lead inexorably to the birth of the state.[11]

Thus from its very beginnings, Holocaust remembrance in Israel engaged with, yet subtly modified, traditional commemorative frameworks in order to connect the present to the past while accommodating to the demands of the state. Similarly, in their development of Yad Vashem as the official site of Holocaust commemoration in Israel, its founders also drew upon traditional modes of remembrance, rejecting some and reshaping others to create an Israeli vision of Holocaust remembrance. For while the majority of Yad Vashem's founders were not observant Jews, their worldview was deeply influenced by Jewish tradition,[12] and it is these pre-existing traditional frameworks, modified by the political realities facing the new state, that formed the foundation for Holocaust commemoration at Yad Vashem.

Yad Vashem was established by an act of Knesset in 1953, but discussions pertaining to a proposed memorial in Jerusalem for the victims of the Holocaust were first held as the reports of the mass killings reached the *Yishuv*[13] in British Mandate Palestine.[14] Planning for a memorial continued in the immediate post-war period but was interrupted by the 1948 War, with lobbying resumed by Mordechi Shenhavi in 1950. Shenhavi, a founding member of the left-wing Zionist youth movement, *Ha-Shomer Ha-Zair*, made *aliyah*[15] from Vienna in 1919. One of the earliest advocates for a national site for Holocaust commemoration – indeed he presented his first commemorative initiative to the Jewish National Fund (JNF) in 1942 – he was also explicit in his desire for this site to

integrate traditional Jewish forms of commemoration within a Zionist vision.[16] Mooli Brog, in an article exploring Shenhavi's commitment to this goal, clearly demonstrates the difficulties Shenhavi faced in garnering support for a centralized place and authority for such a commemorative body.[17] What is striking about Shenhavi's commemorative vision is its explicitly mystical nature. He recounts an early 'vision' he had in 1920 while lecturing to a group of young *Ha-Shomer Ha-Zair* members in Lvov in which he 'suddenly saw himself, as if in a childhood dream, lecturing to a group of young people, in the very same hall, as an emissary from Palestine'.[18] Much later, Shenhavi attributed to this vision the status of an 'epiphany', linking its prophetic resonance with his later commitment to establishing a place for Holocaust commemoration in the *Yishuv*. In 1946, in a plenary meeting of the *Vaad Ha-Leumi*,[19] he recounted another, explicitly resurrective vision he had experienced in August 1942, the time of the mass deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka death camp:

> … as I fought myself hard, fearing that my feelings might be mistaken, I saw all those millions in a dream. I didn't know then that was six million. *Those millions walked toward Zion with monuments on their shoulders*. Can you imagine the length of that chain, the faces of those people, carrying the flame of life? ... They chose one place for themselves, lay down the monuments, and place them there in an orderly or disorderly manner. The monument to their lives, the *monument of testimony,* was established.[20]

Understanding his crusade to memorialize the murdered Jews of Europe as an explicitly resurrective task, Shenhavi continued to petition for and develop proposals pertaining to a centralized place for Holocaust commemoration throughout the period of the Holocaust itself and into the immediate post-State period. As Stephanie Shosh Rotem outlines in her detailed discussion of the changing architectural visions of Yad Vashem, Shenhavi's initial proposals were monumental in scale and vision.[21] The proposal presented to the JNF in 1942 included plans for:

> … commemorating "all the names of the Jewish victims in all countries of the world, and also the names of the Jewish soldiers that fought in the war" … within a 500,000 square meter "Garden of the People" (*Gan Am*), surrounded by "pavilions of Jewish heroism throughout the ages", a cemetery, a "symbolic cemetery", a sanatorium, an hotel, a central archive that would also include an archive

> of photographs of Eretz Israel, sports facilities, a convention hall, offices and dormitories for "the orphans of Israel, victims of war and pogroms".[22]

While ultimately rejected by the JNF, the proposals can be seen as the originating point for a monumental and metahistorical vision of Holocaust remembrance in Israel. In these proposals, it is possible to detect a mix of the historical and the metahistorical as Shenhavi deliberately references and transforms traditional Jewish archetypes in his struggle to create a commemorative form for an unprecedented Diaspora tragedy within the confines of a new, secular Jewish state. For example, Brog notes that in Shenhavi's original proposal funding for such a memorial would be raised in the month of *Elul*, the month directly before *Tishrei*, the month of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* (Jewish New Year and Day of Atonement). The festivals stress the themes of personal and communal repentance and restoration. In an exact imitation of a long-standing Diaspora tradition of raising charitable funds at this point in the liturgical year, Shenhavi co-opts and develops these very same themes, but in his fundraising efforts repentance would lead ultimately to a Zionist vision of redemption and resurrection through *aliyah*:

> For what happened to us and what may yet happen, perish the thought, to the Jews who remain in dispersion, there is but one answer: to lead the people from the disaster of their destiny to the remedy for that disaster. There is no remedy but to build *Eretz Yisrael*. (Internal memorandum to Jewish National Fund head office board, 10 January 1943)[23]

As news of the European disaster began filtering through to the *Yishuv*, more attempts to both protest and mourn the events taking place in Nazi-occupied Europe were undertaken. Similar to Shenhavi's fledgling attempts at communal commemoration, these events were a mix of traditional and more secular strategies. For example, from 30 November 1942 to 2 December 1942 the National Council, with the consent of the Jewish Agency Executive, proclaimed three days of 'alarm, protest, and outcry'. Involving political protest alongside more traditional forms of commemoration and mourning, such as fasting and prayer, the events 'were a watershed in the *Yishuv's* consciousness'.[24] While there was some secular, left-wing opposition to the traditional nature of the commemorations, an estimated number of 100,000 individuals,

approximately one-fifth of the *Yishuv's* population at that time, participated in these events.[25]

Shenhavi continued his struggle throughout the period of the war itself, culminating in his comprehensive proposal *A Monument and a Name (Yad Vashem)* printed in *Davar* on 25 May 1945. While his long-standing desire for the memorial site to be situated on an agricultural settlement would not be realized,[26] many of the ideas Shenhavi originally referenced would come to influence Holocaust remembrance in the fledgling state. For example, his and others' emphasis on resurrection and restoration are echoed in the Holocaust Remembrance and Heroism Law – Yad Vashem, 5713–1953 – the idea of posthumous citizenship for the victims of the *Shoah*. This radical legislation, alongside other initiatives for the enshrining of Holocaust remembrance into law in Israel, was presented to the Knesset in 1952 by the then Minister for Education, historian and, in 1953, Director of Yad Vashem, Professor Ben Zion Dinur, and was legislated on 28 August 1953. The efforts of Shenhavi and others to build a commemorative site, however, would only begin to be realized on 29 July 1954 when the cornerstone for the original Yad Vashem complex was laid at *Har HaZikkaron,* the mountain site upon which also sits the national military cemetery of *Har Herzl*. The first historical exhibitions at Yad Vashem were mounted only in the 1960s and the first, comprehensive permanent exhibition opened in 1973.[27]

From its rather humble beginnings, the institution evolved into a vast museum and memorial complex, incorporating a research institute, archive and pedagogic centre. The complex now contains some 68 million pages of documents pertaining to the Holocaust, over 24,000 artifacts and around 10,500 artworks. Major memorials placed throughout the site include the original *Ohel HaZikkaron* (Tent of Remembrance), the Children's Memorial, the Avenue and Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations, the Memorial to the Deportees, a variety of memorials to the partisan and resistance groups active throughout the period of the Holocaust and the Valley of the Communities. The most recent and extensive renovation of the site involved the building of the NHM, and the incorporation of the Hall of Names within it, a Museum of Holocaust Art, an Exhibitions Pavilion for the display of temporary exhibitions, a new synagogue, a Learning Centre and a Visual Centre.[28]

Despite official instruction that the *Ohel HaZikkaron* (Tent of Remembrance) was to remain the primary memorial space of the site, the monumental NHM, comprising 4,600 square metres of exhibition space, has become the undeniable centrepiece of the complex.

This massive project has transformed Yad Vashem from a 'Tent to a Temple' (*Ohel* to *Beit HaMikdash*), from an intimate space built primarily to honour the victims, to a powerful, national institution that both contributes to and reflects the complex and constantly evolving relationship between the memory of the Holocaust and contemporary Israeli public life. The result is a 'Temple of Memory' that has enlarged not only the historical content of the displays but also their mythic scope. In the biblical narrative, the *Ohel* was a modest structure, a portable and fragile sacred dwelling that allowed the community of Israel to commune with each other and their God through their long trek in the wilderness. In sharp contrast, the *Beit HaMikdash* was built as much for their neighbours as for the Ancient Israelites themselves, its presence on Mount Zion an explicit symbol of state power.[29] Mirroring this progression, the Holocaust memory housed at Yad Vashem has developed from a largely internal, familial endeavour to an official state memory deployed largely for the sake of others. In this transformation from 'Tent to Temple', a once largely private grief has become compulsory public viewing, with every visiting foreign diplomat obliged to make official pilgrimage.

How did Holocaust memory, epitomized in the growth of Yad Vashem, come to occupy such a central place in Israeli public life and in the relationship between Israeli and Diaspora Jewish communities? While Dalia Ofer has demonstrated that Holocaust commemoration was a stronger factor in the early years of the state than previously recognised,[30] equally clear was that the power of Holocaust memory in the public sphere and, in particular, as a potential point of connection between Israeli and Diaspora communities remained largely untapped throughout the early years of the state. In general, early forms of Holocaust commemoration in Israel were debated in an atmosphere where the major concern was how to ameliorate the memory of the Holocaust from one of victimhood to heroism. Prominent figures such as Ben Zion Dinur, charged with implementing the Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority law, publicly condemned the 'complacency' of Diaspora Jewry throughout the Holocaust and implied that this complacency played a role in the destruction of European Jewry.[31] Discussion of commemoration, therefore, was undertaken in an environment where the dominant emphasis was, by necessity, focused upon the heroism of the fighters who took part in armed resistance. The backlash against Natan Alterman's 1954 poem 'Holocaust Remembrance Day and the Fighters', in which attempts to broaden the scope of heroism 'even to those who held a child's hand and walked hand in hand, until they

were lost – somewhere',[32] provides a case in point. Alterman's efforts to recast the perceived passivity of the majority of the victims as a form of spiritual resistance sat uncomfortably with many in the early years of the state. For while universal lessons and an understanding of the moral and spiritual resistance of European Jewry were evident in some early writings and debates, the overwhelming 'lesson' drawn from the Holocaust in the Israel of the 1950s and 1960s was that the strengthening of the state was paramount in light of the precariousness of Diaspora existence.[33]

Such a perspective led to a dominant understanding of the Holocaust in the Israeli context as proof positive of the 'negation of the Diaspora', a vision of Diaspora life as one 'where Jews as a minority were unable to live in freedom and were impaired socially, politically and culturally'.[34] Given this perspective, it is small wonder that only a minority of researchers working in the area of Holocaust history in the 1950s and 1960s explicitly recognized the pragmatic function that Holocaust memory *could* have played in the early years of the state. One such commentator who clearly saw the potential for Holocaust memory to unify Israeli and Diaspora Jewry in particular was Yaacov Shelhav, who wrote in a July 1958 edition of the *Yad Vashem Bulletin*:

> Indirectly our subject also touches upon the question of our relations, especially those of the younger generation, to contemporary Diaspora Jewry. No one questions the importance of Diaspora Jewry for the State of Israel, since it constitutes the primary source of material assistance for the State. It is clear, however, that the interest and devotion of world Jewry toward Israel stem primarily from the feeling of a common destiny, which was awakened and underscored as a result of the great catastrophe during the period of the Second World War. Moreover, this awakening has a larger personal element in it. Most of those affected by it are Jews to whom the holocaust [sic] was a personal family tragedy, and the memory of it is still very much alive in them. At times, therefore, the active support extended to the State of Israel is the expression of a personal need. These factors must not be ignored; the holocaust [sic] must be regarded as a powerful force in uniting world Jewry and as an important underlying reason for support in the existence of the State.[35]

What must be remembered is that Shelhav wrote his article precisely because of the *lack of attention* paid to the potential for Holocaust memory to unite Diaspora and Israeli Jewry in the 1950s.[36] Shelhav

argues that the Holocaust was being 'increasingly ignored' in the Israeli context, 'despite the fact that it must be regarded as one of the critical chapters in the history of our people'. The absence of Holocaust memory in public discourse was of great concern to Shelhav who suggested that there may well be great value in turning 'our careful attention to the problem whether the meaning and the lesson of the Holocaust should not consciously serve as one of the underlying premises in our national home'.[37]

Shelhav was clearly in a minority but there were others who also shared his view and lamented the lack of attention paid to the utility of Holocaust memory in the early years of the state. The ambivalence of both the Israeli public and its political leaders toward Holocaust memory was clear to the Yad Vashem Chairman, Dr Arieh Leon Kubovy, who, when writing on the occasion of the adoption of 27 Nissan as *Yom Hashoah V'Hagvurah* (Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day) in 1959, bemoaned the fact that it took eight years for the day to be accorded 'final recognition' in the Knesset as a state-sanctified remembrance day. Kubovy understood the new law to mark a 'turning point in the attitude of the Jewish community of Israel towards the terrible chapter of the extermination of European Jewry', and hoped that the opportunity to officially commemorate would 'strengthen the unity of the Jewish people in Israel and the Diaspora by fostering the consciousness of our common destiny'. Official commemoration was, in turn, a reflection of the 'immortal spirit of Israel and of their struggle for their human and Jewish heritage'.[38] Both Shelhav and Kubovy pleaded the case for remembrance to a public still largely shamed by the memory of the Holocaust, a public that had to be reminded, due to common misperceptions that Holocaust victims went as passive 'sheep to the slaughter', that:

> No people, among those subdued by the Nazis, can claim a higher record of heroic action than the Jewish people: heroism in battle and revolt and passive courage, bravery in upholding the image of God in man under the most barbarous tyranny, boldness in overt and concealed self-sacrifice, dignity on the very edge of the abyss through identification with the Jewish fate, and gallantry in accepting the inevitable with humility yet fearlessly. *We may indeed commune with our brethren reverently and wholeheartedly.*[39]

In another article dated 29 November 1960, Kubovy laments further that, even with the official adoption of 27 Nissan as *Yom Hashoah V'Hagvurah*, many members of the Israeli public still held 'the deep

suspicion that most of our fathers and mothers, brothers, sisters and children, did not die courageously during the Catastrophe'.[40] The antipathy toward Holocaust victims that Kubovy identifies ensured that Holocaust memory developed within a very constrained framework in the early years of the state. *Shoah V'Hagvurah*, Holocaust and Heroism, emerged as the only acceptable and therefore predominant interpretive frame through which the story of the Holocaust could be told in the early years of the state, with the definition of what might be labelled a 'heroic' victim an exceedingly narrow one.

The stark contrast between the current preoccupation with Holocaust memory in Israel and the ambivalence toward how best one might commemorate the victims of the Holocaust in the early years of the state can be clearly seen in the shift of emphasis within the *Yad Vashem Bulletin* itself. Early editions focussed on primary historical research. Articles such as those by Shelhav and Kubovy were in the minority, as the emphasis in these early editions is on the recovery of Holocaust history, and not the importance or utility of Holocaust memory in Israeli public life.[41] Commemoration was only spoken of in relation to official events and, in general, it is the failure of the commemorative process that is noted. Kubovy was particularly explicit with regard to what he perceived as Yad Vashem's failure to fulfil the objectives of commemoration as elucidated in the Holocaust Remembrance and Heroism Law. So strong was his feeling that the institution was unable to live up to its responsibilities that he ended his opening address at the third session of the fifth Yad Vashem Council with the following dire pronouncement:

> We often and rightly state that the Yad Washem [sic] Act is a great document, that one cannot read it without deep emotion, but the Law was entrusted to us in order to have it carried out. It is preferable that we ask for the Law to be changed and the numerous duties assigned to us reduced, that we admit publicly that it is not within our power to comply with it as it now stands, rather than to fail in so sacred an obligation.[42]

A survey of more recent editions of the *Yad Vashem Bulletin* reveals a dramatically changed institution.[43] The *Bulletin* now serves as the institution's 'mouthpiece', its major concern being its ability to illustrate to Yad Vashem's international network of supporters that the central mission of Yad Vashem – commemoration and education of the Holocaust – is being met and, indeed, exceeded.[44] Such a shift is perhaps

to be expected as a result of the increasing professionalization of the organization and the relegating of serious historical research to the refereed scholarly journal, *Yad Vashem Studies*. Yet this development is also indicative of a shift in popular consciousness as to the role and utility of Holocaust memory in the Israeli context. No longer does the institution need to focus on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in order to justify its commemoration of all victims of the *Shoah*. In the contemporary context, Holocaust commemoration has become an inclusive memory for Israeli society at large, and a powerful point of connection between Israeli and Diaspora Jewry. The victims are no longer a source of shame or an issue for debate; rather, they have become part of what may be labelled a 'modern martyrology'. As incidents such as the Kastner affair[45] have receded from public consciousness, and increased historical research has illustrated the impossible situation in which victims of the Holocaust were placed, accusations of 'passivity' or 'complicity' toward both victims and survivors that were evident in the early years of the state no longer appear in public discourse.

This change is both reflected and reinforced in the approach of those historians who developed the content of the displays at the NHM. The team of historians themselves embodied a generational shift as only one, the late Yisrael Gutman, was also a survivor. The historians were keenly aware that in the first stage of Holocaust remembrance in the 1950s and 1960s, the major impetus was to display 'what happened from a very general, historical point of view – the perspective of the victim and the perpetrator, Israel and Germany'.[46] In developing the exhibition for the new Historical Museum, the Jewish victim became the central focus, and the goal was to tell a 'Jewish story of the Holocaust' from the victims' point of view.[47] However, the question emerges: did not the early caretakers of Holocaust memory at Yad Vashem also understand themselves to be telling a 'Jewish story'? Surely, at a state-sponsored Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, the question is not whether a Jewish story should be told, but what the *nature and content* of that Jewish story will be?[48] Unlike Yad Vashem's founders, for whom telling the 'Jewish story of the Holocaust' constituted a fight against forgetfulness – both of the victims and European Jewish civilization – the historians and curators who developed and constructed the new museum were presented with a surfeit of memory and worked consciously to ensure its embrace across as broad a spectrum of the Israeli and Jewish world as possible. Each historical and curatorial choice can be understood, therefore, to reflect not only the fruits of six decades of detailed historical research but also a 'built' recognition of the power of Holocaust memory as

a *unifying* rather than divisive memory, both within and between Israeli and Diaspora Jewry.

The new display had a threefold task: To speak to and 'encompass' the concerns of as broad a cross-section of the (now diversified) Israeli Jewish public as possible, to provide a point of connection between Israeli and Diaspora Jewry, and to relate the memory of the Holocaust to the current concerns of the state. The narrative embodied in the NHM is therefore the result of a very self-conscious curatorial process, in which the *perception* of Holocaust history was deliberated as much as the history itself. The curatorial and historical team asked themselves: what do we want people to see and understand about the Holocaust? How will the exhibit illustrate the Jewish story of the Holocaust and what will the content of this story be? Who is our audience?[49] For example, Avner Shalev, the current Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate and the chief curator of the new Historical Museum exhibition, was well aware that the power of Holocaust memory needed to be extended to those parts of Israeli society that until this time had felt little, if any, connection to 'official' Holocaust memory in Israel.[50] As a result, the NHM includes displays such as the 'North African perspective'. A comparatively minor episode in the history of the Holocaust, the inclusion of this story in the permanent exhibition represents a significant acknowledgement of the need to include Israel's sizeable Sephardic population under the umbrella of Holocaust remembrance. Similarly, the increase in displays concerning the fate of Orthodox Jewry in the Holocaust is a telling inclusion, an attempt to bring Orthodox Jewry into the scope of Israel's 'official Holocaust memory' enshrined at Yad Vashem.

Given such complex historical and contemporary preoccupations, the metahistorical vision of *m'Shoah l'Tkumah* (From *Shoah* to Rebirth/Redemption) that underscored the displays of the old museum could not encompass and support the intricacies of the NHM. Neither could such a framework remain effective in connecting the memory of the *Shoah* to the current Israeli context nor serve as a successful point of connection between Israeli and Diaspora Jews. As such, it is not the appearance of the 'Jewish victim' in the NHM that provides the novelty of the curatorial approach but rather *how* Jewish victimhood under Nazi persecution is interpreted and displayed. The Jewish victim that emerges in the new museum is changed inasmuch as she now reflects not only the diversity that was evident in European Jewry prior to the Holocaust, but also the interests of the various cultural and religious groups evident in contemporary Israeli and Diaspora Jewish

life. To achieve this synthesis, I contend that the history of Jewish victimhood portrayed throughout the NHM has been infused with a renewed and reworked metahistorical meaning. Yad Vashem's Jewish Holocaust victim has been 'eternalized' in line with a long-standing, traditional understanding of the Jewish people as an 'eternal people'. Concurrently, her victimizer has also been contextualized in a metahistorical and eternal archetype, that of Amalek, the eternal enemy of the Jewish people. The redemptive and resurrective vision that underscored Holocaust commemoration at Yad Vashem from its outset remains, but the redeemed victim is no longer only the heroic ghetto fighter or Jewish partisan. The eternal Jewish victim created in the NHM speaks to all Jews from all walks of life. Placing this Jewish victim in the centre rather than the periphery of the exhibition narrative allows the Holocaust memory embodied in the NHM to unite Israeli and Diaspora Jews as one; an eternal people engaged in an eternal struggle for survival, resurrected and redeemed in a new Temple in Jerusalem – the sacred site of Yad Vashem.

'Remember what Amalek did to you … Do not forget!'

In order to understand the enduring legacy of the Amalek myth and uncover its deployment in Yad Vashem's NHM, it is necessary to briefly sketch out its origins and development in Jewish thought. The nation of Amalek appears two times in the *Torah,* in Exodus 17:8–16 and Deuteronomy 25:17–19. In the first instance, the struggle between Israel and Amalek is not given a rationale but upon completion of the battle Israel is exhorted by Divine command to 'utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven' (Exodus 17:14). In the retelling of the account in Deuteronomy, an explanation is given that Amalek 'surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary, and cut down all the stragglers in your rear' (Deuteronomy 25:18). In this telling, not only is the incident introduced with the imperative command 'Remember what Amalek did to you' (Deuteronomy 25:17) but it is bookended by the equally strong command 'Do not forget!' (Deuteronomy 25:19).[51]

In 1 Samuel, King Saul is commanded by the Prophet to go and destroy Amalek, 'Now go, attack Amalek, and proscribe all that belongs to him. Spare no one, but kill alike men and women, infants and sucklings, oxen and sheep, camels and asses!' (1 Samuel 15:3). Saul fails in fulfilling this command, sparing King Agag, who is understood in the tradition to be the ancestor of Haman, son of Hammedatha the

Agagite, the Prime Minister of Persia. Haman, in the narrative of the Book of Esther, is the mastermind behind the planned genocide of Persian Jewry. Thus, the implication is that Saul's failure to implement God's radical command leads eventually to the rise of the enemies of Israel, time and time again. While the command to 'spare no one' is not realized in either the Samuel narrative or the *Megillat* Esther, the injunction to 'blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven' has remained a powerful figurative trope in the tradition, symbolized by the still-practised custom among some traditional Jewish communities of testing a new pen by writing the name of Amalek and then immediately crossing it out.

Over time, traditional exegetes have struggled to interpret the harsh decree in a variety of ways.[52] The conundrum for those wishing to engage with the implications of the Divine injunction to destroy Amalek 'utterly' (1 Samuel 15:3) is to reconcile a seemingly unjust (indeed brutal) Divine command with the implicit morality that any Divine command is understood to contain. This problem, commonly referred to as Divine Command Morality, first appears in Plato's *Euthyphro*.[53] Avi Sagi summarizes the central dilemma in a discussion pertaining to the command to destroy Amalek as follows:

> Is an act right (or wrong) because God commands it (or forbids) it, or does God command (or forbid) an act because it is right (or wrong)?[54]

Sagi, in his study of the interpretation of the Amalek story in traditional Jewish sources, argues that the latter comprises the dominant view with regard to the morality of the Amalek command – that is, morality is not conditional upon religion or God, rather 'Jewish tradition acknowledges the autonomy of morality and assumes that divine commands abode by moral considerations'.[55] If this were not the case, and a command was simply assumed to be moral because God willed it, there would be no moral imperative to undertake the task of exegesis.[56] The exegetical task, therefore, is to seek out the morality in what appears at first reading to be the punitive command of a vindictive and vengeful Deity.

In his review of traditional Jewish exegetical responses to this troubling and powerful myth, Sagi groups the variety of interpretations into two main categories: the 'realistic' and the 'symbolic'. The former stresses the 'concrete, historical [sic] facts of the relationship between the two nations' while the latter focuses on the 'metaphorical significance of these events'.[57] The common factor between the two approaches is identified by Sagi as their tendency to 'refrain from

suggesting that the punishment of Amalek can be justified by claiming that morality either depends on religion or conflicts with it'.[58] The question for both approaches becomes: is morality to be found in the act itself or God's willing of the act? Sagi argues that in the Jewish tradition it is the former that holds sway, and it is the deed that becomes the exegetical focus with regard to confronting the moral dilemma of a seemingly unjust command.

A 'realistic' interpretation, therefore, may conclude that Amalek had broken the rules of just warfare and in so doing had not only performed blatantly immoral acts, but had also rebelled against God. Sagi points to traditional commentators such as Yitzhak Abrabanel (1437–1508) who concluded from such a perspective that the harshness of Amalek's punishment is due to the extreme nature of the crime and therefore meant to serve as a deterrent to iniquity.[59] Other commentators in the realist camp, such as Nachmanides (1194–1270), highlight Amalek's desire to rebel against and therefore 'make himself master over God'.[60] In such interpretations, the action against Amalek becomes contingent upon the 'wrongdoer's deed endangering a cardinal value, such as faith in God'.[61] What the various opinions share is their insistence that the morality (or not) of the command be located outside of the command itself – that 'the radical war against Amalek is not a product of God's arbitrary will',[62] thus upholding Sagi's central thesis that morality exists autonomously to God's command in the Jewish tradition.

The second category of traditional response, the 'symbolic view', Sagi posits to have grown out of the discomfort associated with the harshness of the punishment contained in Deuteronomy 25:17. In other words, no matter how terrible the treachery of Amalek, the 'symbolic' interpreters find difficulty in reconciling the severity of the punishment with the offence. Sagi further divides this category into the 'metaphysical, the conceptual, and the psychological'.[63] All three kinds of response share the common factor of reconciling the morality of the Divine command by focussing on the symbolic meaning of Amalek's deed.

In metaphysical interpretations, such as those found in the mystical writings of the *Zohar*, the battle of Amalek is recast as the 'war between the holy *sefirot* (the divine realm) and the forces of impurity'. In this interpretation, Israel comes to symbolize the unchanging good but Amalek remains a symbol in flux, thereby allowing it to become attached to a variety of historical incidents and entities. As such, traditional commentators have utilized this archetypical form to associate Amalek not with a particular people as such but rather with all 'enemies of Israel', that is, those defined by their enmity toward the People Israel.

What is of great value in Sagi's discussion is his recognition of the propensity for the metaphysical, symbolic interpretation to:

> … split the whole of existence; acts such as those between Israel and Amalek are not merely human acts but are persistent reflections of independent metaphysical entities.[64]

Sagi continues from this premise to conclude that 'the punishment meted out to Amalek is thus not immoral; rather, it expresses the hope that good will prevail'. That is, in identifying the evil, we will be able to obliterate it and seek the good.

Sagi may well be correct in this conclusion but what is missed is the problem inherent in interpreting the Amalek myth as personifying a metaphysical dualism in which one factor remains constant and the other changes. If Israel is always the embodied good and the enemies of Israel are always the embodied evil, then there is the possibility that an active stance vis-à-vis moral responsibility may well be abnegated by Israel in this dichotomy.[65] Such a propensity is tempered in the tradition in *kabbalistic* interpretations that understand the dualism between Israel and Amalek to refer to the individual rather than the group, to the *yaytzer ha'rah*, the 'evil impulse' that is active at all times in all human beings. In other words, not only enemies of Israel but Israel itself must be vigilant against the propensity toward Amalek in all of us.[66] It is precisely this tension between understanding the story of Amalek as a mythic narrative in which Israel remains always victim, rather than a more universalistic, symbolic interpretation in which Israel, too, can identify with the category of perpetrator, that is at stake in Yad Vashem's mythic deployment of the Amalek narrative. The following reading of the architecture and displays of the NHM aims to reveal the modern symbolic shape of this ancient archetype and lays bare its influence in and implications for Israel's contemporary political concerns.

Ezekiel's Vision Restored

Two short sentences contained in the preface to the NHM's catalogue neatly encapsulate the underlying shape of the entire permanent exhibition.

> … at the forefront of the permanent exhibit is … the individual – the human being and, particularly, the Jew – and the tapestry of Jewish life that predated World War II.

> The Jews' struggle to find a safe haven anywhere on earth was met with the obtuseness and indifference of an estranged world – except for several thousand Righteous Among the Nations who empathized with the suffering of the downtrodden and rescued Jews and, at mortal risk, offered them life.[67]

The NHM was to tell a Jewish story of the Holocaust from the victims' perspective. Indeed, it is both understandable and desirable that an Israeli Holocaust museum can and should seek to tell a Jewish story of the Holocaust and the curators and historians are justifiably unapologetic in their choice to create a Jewish Holocaust museum in Jerusalem. Yet, surely, the question is not whether a Jewish story should be told but what the content of this Jewish story will be? Who are the Jews portrayed in this exhibit and, in particular, who are they within the narrative of their persecution? What is the content of the Jewish story that is told in this space and how does it draw upon and reflect ancient archetypes already existent in the Jewish tradition for thousands of years? I argue that the Jewish story of the NHM is largely a story in which to be Jewish in Yad Vashem's recounting of the Holocaust is to stand alone against an eternal enemy. As such, while the NHM is indeed historical in its painstakingly detailed reconstruction of the decimation of European Jewry under the Nazis, it also contains a profoundly metahistorical message, as the struggle against a genocidal regime in the mid-twentieth century is at once recast as an eternal struggle between good and evil.

Shalev and Gutterman's statement in the exhibition's official catalogue provides the point of departure for the following reading of the architecture and key displays of Yad Vashem's NHM. The interpretation that follows posits that the reconfigured site comprises a fusion of two powerful, ancient sacred narratives: the legend of Amalek, the eternal enemy of the Jews, and that of Resurrection or Restoration, the longed-for return of Israel to Zion. These sacred archetypes are not the only metahistorical narratives at play within the space.[68] The permanent display of the NHM at Yad Vashem is vast, and, like the USHMM, its intricacies do not allow for a detailed review of every section of the exhibition. As such, the following reading focuses upon those sections of the architecture and display that pertain particularly to the archetype of Amalek and its emplotment within the theologies of Resurrection and Restoration. As with the USHMM, the metahistorical vision and power of the NHM begins with its placement and architecture; elements that together form a new sacred site in an ancient sacred city.

The mythic memory of the Jewish people is seared into the mountain landscape of Jerusalem. Jewish tradition holds that of the ten measures of beauty God gave to the world, Jerusalem received nine.[69] In ancient Israel, the mountain of mountains, the Temple Mount, provided a focal point for Israelite piety and ritual. In the present, sacred allusions still abound as each kilometre recounts a biblical incident, which is summarily recast into the context of contemporary Israeli life. The layered archaeological sites of the city continuously reinscribe biblical memory into its geography, endowing the landscape with sacred significance and shaping present realities in relationship to an ever-present past. Elie Wiesel asks, is Yad Vashem 'special … because it is in Jerusalem?'[70] The answer is, of course, yes. But what is the nature of this 'specialness'? How does the sacred significance of the holiest Jewish city shape and change the sacred memory of Europe's murdered Jews?

The challenge facing the international group of acclaimed architects vying for the opportunity to build Yad Vashem's NHM was immense. A 100-page brief outlined the major historical themes that needed to be given space within the building as well as its museological requirements.[71] The brief also took explicit account of both the landscape and the memorials already existent on the site. Architects competing for the commission would need to:

> … design a museum structure that would combine the Holocaust's historical narrative with an appropriate and effective experience for the thousands of individuals who visit Yad Vashem daily; to make the museum an integral part of the visitors' route through the campus; to design the Hall of Names as an essential component of the museum; and to maintain the character of the surrounding natural landscape, as well as the prominence of the Hall of Remembrance – the focus of commemoration at the site since its early years.[72]

Internationally renowned architect Moshe Safdie, who would be awarded the commission after several rounds of deliberation, was well aware of the visual and emotional impact of the Jerusalem setting. He notes the power of the geographic context for the building and its visitors, particularly in his creation of a panoramic exit vista that affords uninterrupted views of the Jerusalem forest and city bustling beyond:

> It is this moment [the exit vista] in the museum that existentially differentiates Yad Vashem from every other Holocaust museum and

> memorial. … 'Why should the central Holocaust museum be in Jerusalem? Why not in Eastern Europe, where it occurred? … because many of the survivors and their offspring are living there.'[73]

In Safdie's design the landscape is the connection between the building, the memory and the people. Encased in the mountains of Jerusalem, the victims and survivors of European Jewry would find their resurrected home.

Safdie's massive triangular structure is reminiscent of a variety of symbolic Jewish and Holocaust references. A half Star of David, a pink triangle – the built allusions are many. Other commentators have even compared the shape of the building to the ancient Egyptian temple in Luxor (circa 1292–1550 BCE).[74] Safdie himself remains committed to a non-didactic approach to the space, preferring to let each person create 'his or her own symbolic interpretations'.[75] The emotional power of the structure, however, is arguably found in its placement rather than its shape – the context of the building, rather than the building itself, providing the most fertile ground for interpretation. Built into the top of the mountain, the structure literally slices the mountain in half. While practical building requirements held some sway in Safdie's decision – the NHM could not be built higher than the *Ohel HaZikaron* (Hall or Tent of Remembrance) which was to remain the focal point for commemorative occasions at Yad Vashem – Safdie's choice to 'hide' rather than 'reveal' the memory of the Holocaust within the Mountain of Remembrance lends an unresolvable tension to the site. The building becomes at once a part of, yet separate from its immediate surroundings, as the corollary of placing the memory of the Holocaust deep into the national soil must, by necessity, involve a rupturing of that very ground.

Many interpretations of the building have been offered; that it casts a symbolic scar on the landscape, reminiscent of the permanent scar that the Holocaust has left upon the Jewish people, or perhaps, as Joan Ockman suggests in the official building catalogue, the 'archaeological scar [is] symbolically healed by the landscape itself'.[76] Other interpretations suggest that the *mysterium tremendum* of the Holocaust requires an architecture shrouded in a similar mystery or perhaps the placement of the building deep into the mountain itself is reminiscent of the holiness of another hidden place in another holy mountain; the innermost court of the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum of the ancient Temple, the holiest space of the Temple Mount.[77]

This effect of 'holiness through separation' is amplified by the external walls of the building, which declare the other worldliness of the Holocaust in bold, concrete slabs. In a city where legal permission is required to build in any material other than the requisite Jerusalem limestone, the special dispensation given by municipal building authorities to build the new museum in unadorned concrete lends the site a peculiar sense of displacement. Despite a concerted effort on the part of the NHM's curators and historians to incorporate and celebrate the world of Diaspora and, in particular, Yiddish-speaking Jewry within the main display,[78] critics such as Joan Ockman are still tempted to locate the ideas of 'place and displacement' evoked through the use of the 'alien, industrial material of concrete' in the enduring dichotomy of 'Diaspora and Zion'.[79] While such an interpretation calls into question the success of the curatorial team's desire to break down this opposition, the use of concrete rather than limestone materials, and the immersion of the massive structure within the soil of the mountain itself, ensures that the memory of the Holocaust will remain forever alien to, yet seared within, the heart of Jerusalem.

As a result, upon approach, due to its geographical placement alone, the visitor is already aware of the heightened historical and sacred resonance of this particular Holocaust memorial museum. This effect is further intensified as the visitor enters the memorial complex along an indirect, winding road that from the outset lends a deliberate 'hiddenness' to the site. One must deliberately seek out the space, and indeed this was the intent of Yad Vashem's founders, who stressed that the site should emanate a sacred character. The founders' deliberate choice to physically set the memorial complex apart from its immediate surrounds ensured that the institution would resist the pull toward the profane in the original sense of the word.[80] Safdie's architecture compounds this sense of separation and hiddenness as the visitor can never view the building in its entirety. Indeed, the nature of the building is such that it remains hidden even from the outside – one is never completely able to view the entire edifice from any perspective.

Given these considerations, Safdie's architecture might rightfully be described as redemptive, as the overwhelming monumentality of the building, entrenched within its meaning-laden mountain context, combines to make a powerful statement about the connection between the Holocaust and Israel. Several critics have acknowledged this effect, prior even to the museum's completion. In an interview with Hillel Halkin in 2000, Avner Shalev rejected the charge that the museum display itself

would convey a Zionist approach to telling the story of the Holocaust but conceded that such a perspective was existent in the 'subtext' of Safdie's architecture:

> 'I want the context of Yad Vashem to remain a Jewish one,' he said. 'I don't believe that what happened to the Jews should be subsumed under the general category of human tragedy. That's Washington's approach, not ours. The historical record is clear, for example, that Hitler never sought the total annihilation of Gypsies or homosexuals, or of anyone but the Jews. But if by a Zionist approach you mean a politicized one, I'm against. We won't represent the Holocaust as a Zionist narrative. We'll leave that to the subtext.'
>
> Taking out some architectural plans, he unrolled the 'subtext' on a table: It is Safdie's design for the new museum …[81]

Monumental in structure, the architectural language of the building is far from a subtext; indeed at times it is so strong that it threatens to overwhelm the exhibition content. Yet, in the reading that follows I argue that the exhibition content, despite Shalev's claim, *does* continue to propagate a Zionist vision of the Holocaust. Encased within Safdie's resurrective and redemptive shell, the exhibition not only references the mythic narratives of *m'Shoah l'Tkumah* (Destruction to Rebirth/Redemption) that underpinned earlier forms of remembrance at Yad Vashem but also adds a new and powerful dimension. In the renewed Zionist vision of the Holocaust displayed in the NHM, the destruction of European Jewry is not only the reason *for* the existence of the state; it also provides a compelling backdrop for a consideration of contemporary political and security concerns.

The Auschwitz of Eternal Return

Framing Yad Vashem's monumental entry court, the words of the prophet Ezekiel bear down, 'I will put my breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil' (Ezekiel 37:14), announcing the sacred mission of the institution and readying the visitor for the resurrective journey upon which they are poised to embark. With practical necessities, such as bathrooms, cloakrooms, visitor information and a cafeteria placed in a separate building (*mevoah*), entry to the NHM is uninterrupted. Unlike similar institutions, such as the USHMM, the permanent exhibition at Yad Vashem stands alone, uncluttered by the quotidian requirements of the contemporary museum.

Upon entering the vast, triangular structure, the external walls give way to a massive central corridor that allows the visitor to at all times keep Safdie's exit vista in sight. While the side galleries temporarily envelop the visitor within the traumatic history of the Holocaust, the criss-crossed narrative path continuously allows for some relief in the more open space of the central corridor. Again and again, the visitor must pass through this central axis, as the enforced narrative route of the exhibition allows no option for digression. The corridor view to the north thus serves to assure the visitor that the harrowing journey will eventually come to an end in a vibrant present, embodied in the pine forests of Jerusalem. The dramatic effect of this redemptive finale is reinforced by the diametrically opposing experience of the first display, a floor-to-ceiling film installation, continuously screening a 'world that was'. Placed immediately to the left of the museum's entry point, Michal Rovner's impressive cinematic creation allows the visitor only one glimpse back into a world no longer existent – the world of European Jewry prior to the Second World War.[82] Once the montage is viewed, the visitor abruptly turns to descend into the main display, leaving behind a world that is forever lost, while simultaneously moving forward to a world continually renewed.

In dramatic contrast to the opening film's pastiche of European Jewish life, the first static exhibit the visitor encounters after viewing the video installation recounts the massacre of Jewish prisoners by Nazis and local collaborators on 19 September 1944 at the Klooga concentration camp in Estonia. Rovner's world is no more. Objects displayed include the personal effects of the prisoners found in their pockets only days later by the liberating Soviet forces. The message of the two opening exhibits could not be clearer – the enemy sought (and in large part succeeded) to destroy an entire world. So zealous was the enemy in pursuit of this goal that the murder of Europe's Jews continued unabated, even when the war itself was lost. Yet, in always keeping the end in sight, Safdie's redemptive architecture assuages the enemy's zeal and the visitor can emerge from the horror reassured that, while millions of individual lives were lost, national restoration was the ultimate result. The eternal enemy is overcome once more and the eternal People Israel is again sustained, indeed resurrected, in the earthly Jerusalem of the present.

As with all aspects of this meticulously prepared permanent exhibition, the historical verity of the opening displays is not in question. Rather, it is the *choice* to frame the beginning of the narrative of the entire NHM with these episodes that is significant. Just as the USHMM sets the Holocaust within the context of a 'negative epiphany' through

the decision to open its permanent display with photos of the liberation of camps by American troops, so too does the bookending of the new exhibition between Rovner's 'world that was', the horrific crimes of Klooga and eventual restoration in the mountain setting of Jerusalem, set Yad Vashem's display within two powerful metahistorical narratives, each of which serve to place the history of the Holocaust within distinct, sacred frameworks. These two theodicies, national resurrection and restoration and the eternal enemy of Amalek, reinforce each other constantly throughout the duration of the display. The result is a metahistorical interpretation of the Holocaust that employs ancient national and communal frameworks.

After a consideration of the first two displays, the visitor is poised to delve further into the historical content that underscores this metahistorical vision. The next section of the exhibition focuses on the Nazi Party's rise to power, with the most dramatic of the displays being the 'Trench of Books'. Books such as Freud's *Unbehagen in der Kultur* (*Civilization and its Discontents*) and Marx's *Das Kapital* are scattered in a depressed ridge in the central corridor, firmly establishing European Jewry's integral role in the cultural and intellectual world of Europe prior to the Second World War, and the violent destruction of that world the visitor will now witness. The display then continues to contextualize the experience of Nazi persecution within the long history of Christian antisemitism in Europe. The emphasis on antisemitism as the precursor and backdrop to Nazi racial antisemitism frames the Holocaust in explicitly 'non-universalist' terms. For example, short shrift is given to other factors pertinent to the persecution of Europe's Jews, such as totalitarianism, fascism and Nazi race science. Some members of Yad Vashem's historical team expressed discomfort with this emphasis, particularly the lack of space dedicated to the radical nature of Nazi race science.[83] While these factors are not totally absent, the display clearly points toward Christian and modern antisemitism as constituting the crucible in which the radical nature of Nazi racial antisemitism was forged. Significantly, other victims of Nazi persecution are mentioned but only on a singular panel. They reappear later in the display where their persecution becomes pertinent to the Jewish story being told but, in large part, their stories remain peripheral in the overall exhibit.

To tell a Jewish story of the Holocaust, the historical team then had to make a series of difficult decisions. At points the architecture complemented the historical exposition; for example, at the building's narrowest point, the 'world closes in on the Jews'[84] as the ghetto section begins. Yet the building's monumental structure also threatened to overwhelm.

As one historian surmised the challenge, 'we had to find a solution to the architecture'.[85] To be effective the exhibits had to work with the building yet also tell their own story – to stand independently as such. One such concern was how to tell the story without overwhelming the visitor with a chronological and didactic historical exposition. However, the opposite approach, a totally thematic display, would ultimately confuse, leaving the visitor without the coherence evoked by a narrative display. A solution was found in the skilful interweaving of chronological and thematic frameworks. Following a standard historical exposition of Jewish persecution under the Nazis, that is, segregation in the German and Austrian Reich, war and radical separation in Eastern Europe's ghettos, and the move toward extermination with the invasion of the Soviet Union in mid-1941, the exhibit then shifts to a thematic focus, with the most powerful treatment being the displays pertaining to the epicentre of the extermination process, the death and labour camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau.[86]

Unlike most standard Holocaust displays, in NHM, Auschwitz is explored first in its function as a death camp, with its initial role in forced labour coming later in the display. This thematic approach was vital in establishing the Jewish approach of the display. For it is at this point, with Auschwitz at its height as an industrialized killing centre, that the Jew is at his most alone, his most abandoned. It is this section of the display that, when examined closely, provides the core material underpinning the metahistorical narrative of Amalek that frames the exhibition's Jewish story.

The key dilemma facing the historians and curators working on this section of the exhibit, as for all Holocaust museums seeking to display the killing process at Auschwitz, was how to 'represent the unrepresentable'. There are, of course, no photographs of the gassing process – the closest photographic depiction being the now-infamous photos of the *Sonderkommando* burning bodies in the open when the crematoria could not keep up with the rate of people murdered in the gas chambers. Some of the historians working on the project felt that it was not necessary to depict the gassing process but, ultimately, the option of a model was decided upon.[87] The visitor views the process of extermination detail by excruciating detail as the prisoners are unwittingly led to their deaths. The scale model of the gas chambers and crematoria is a replica of the original model at the Auschwitz museum, the USHMM and the Imperial War Museum. Therefore, it is not the content but the framing of the killing process that differentiates Yad Vashem's treatment of Auschwitz from other, similar displays.

Unlike the Auschwitz section at the USHMM, biblical quotations are not utilized at this juncture in the Yad Vashem display. Interestingly, and in the face of some opposition,[88] the curators and historians in charge of this section were able to incorporate quotations from Polish, non-Jewish prisoner Tadeusz Borowski, who would eventually write *This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen*.[89] Borowski's quotation is placed adjacent to the now infamous photos of the arrival ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau:

> Whoever enters this place will not retrieve a thing from it, not even his ashes.[90]

Borowski's words are followed by those of the Italian Jewish inmate, Primo Levi:

> Thus, in an instant, our women, our parents, our children disappeared. We saw them for a short while as an obscure mass at the other end of the platform; then we saw nothing more.[91]

Each of these quotations is, of course, from secondary sources – they comprise testimony written after the fact. The practical reasons for such a choice are self-evident – it is simply not possible to retain primary documentation from the victims of the Auschwitz killing process. Thus, the closest example of what at first glance could be considered a primary source is a quotation that stands adjacent to the model of the gassing process:

> Do not think that you will succeed in destroying the Jewish people. The Jewish people will live forever … when he had finished … (he) cried out emphatically '*Shema Yisrael*', and all the Jews cried with him '*Shema Yisrael*'.[92]

The caption ascribes the derivation of the quote as follows:

> Rabbi Moshe Friedman, the Boyaner Rebbe, spoke these words prior to being murdered in the gas chambers, as testified by Lieb Langfuss, a member of the SonderKommando in Auschwitz-Birkenau.[93]

Taking into account that it is impossible to produce primary documentation from the victims of the Auschwitz killing process, the appellation on the caption text denotes an unusual curatorial choice. In a history

museum, it is not standard practice to include as 'documents' materials that are received second-hand, so to speak. This observation is not an insinuation that the curators shirked their historical responsibilities. Rather, the interesting effect of the curator's choice is that the quotation and its caption are reminiscent of traditional text, in particular classical rabbinic texts. It is commonplace for classical *midrashim* to begin with an appellation along the lines of 'Rabbi X said in the name of Rabbi Y'.[94] Accordingly, a chain of authority is established and the credentials or lineage of the *midrashist* recognized. Further, rather than a mere recounting or recitation of historical events, traditional *midrashim* attempt to give meaning to history. Similarly, this text attributed to the Boyaner Rebbe does not extend our historical knowledge of the killing process at Auschwitz, but it does reveal something of the meaning with which that process is imbued in the course of the Yad Vashem display.

The Boyaner Rebbe's message resonates with a long-held traditional view of the Jewish people as an 'eternal people' and its corollary, the 'eternal but changing' nature of each enemy that the Jewish people have faced. This perspective accords with the metahistorical and symbolic manifestation of the Amalek myth discussed in the previous section, in which the enemy remains a symbol in flux, thereby allowing it to become attached to a variety of historical incidents and entities. As noted, traditional commentators have utilized this archetypical form to associate Amalek not with a particular ethnic category as such but rather with all enemies of Israel – that is, those defined by their enmity toward the People Israel. The point of the Rebbe's statement is clear – the destruction of Auschwitz is simply another episode in the history of Jewish persecution but it is not the final word.

Such accounts are not a new development in traditional Jewish literature. It resonates in particular with *midrashim* pertaining to the time of Roman persecution in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. Perhaps the most famous of these is the *midrash* recounted in the Preface to this work which tells of the martyrdom of Rabbi Ben Teradion. Ben Teradion was put to death by the Romans for continuing to teach Torah, an activity explicitly forbidden by the Roman authorities.

> Our Sages remember: Rabbi Hanina Ben Teradion was studying the Torah and holding a Scroll of the Law to his chest. Our enemies took hold of him, wrapped him in the Scroll, placed bundles of branches around him and set them on fire.
> His disciples called out, 'Rabbi, what do you see?'

> He answered them, 'The parchment is burning but the letters are soaring high above me.'[95]

Both the traditional *midrash* above and the appellation attributed to the Boyaner Rebbe imbue history with counter-intuitive meaning by providing a metahistorical interpretation of a historical event. Just as the second-century *midrashist* transformed what might be labelled by any objective assessment a catastrophic defeat into an opportunity to affirm the eternal and indestructible nature of Torah, so too does the appellation attributed to the Boyaner Rebbe imbue the cruel and senseless murder of millions with an eternal resonance. But if the Jewish people are eternal, how is this eternal existence to be assured? Who will stand with the Jews and who will stand aside and ultimately share responsibility for their fate?

The answer to these questions is to be found in the treatment of the actions of the Allied forces in the display. The story of the Second World War is peripheral to the display at best as the Holocaust is decontextualized from the process of war at the outset through its placement in the history of antisemitism rather than the radical nature of the Nazi occupation, or an emphasis on the role of race science or other factors. Consequently, the actions of the Allies are mentioned only at key turning points in the Nazi war against the Jews and their failings are emphasized.[96] Significant among these are the displays immediately following the Auschwitz exhibits that outline the role of the camp as an extermination centre. The failure of the Allies to comprehend and act upon the radical nature of the Nazis' genocidal campaign against the Jews is emphasized through the testimony of Jan Karski, a Polish resistance fighter. The footage was shot in 1942, but not made public at that time. Karski notes explicitly the ill-fated Casablanca meeting, where Churchill and Roosevelt reaffirmed that the central commitment of the Allies to undertake 'all efforts to militarily defeat Nazi Germany' would take precedence over 'side issues' such as the persecution and murder of Europe's Jews.

The issue at stake in the content and placement of this display is not whether the Allied decision to give priority to winning the war rather than stopping the genocide was justified or not. Rather, the interest lies in how the placement of this section gives emphasis to Shalev's point that Europe's Jews were abandoned by the 'obtuseness and indifference of an estranged world'.[97] Such a perspective again underscores the overall metahistorical point of the display – that Amalek (this time in the guise of Nazi Germany), the eternal enemy of the Jew, would again rise

and yet again there would be no one to stand with the Jews. The moral corollary of such a perspective is, of course, that the Jews must stand up for themselves.

The displays outlining the failure of the Allies to come to the rescue of Europe's Jews is given increased significance by the following excerpt from Natan Alterman's poem *From All Peoples*:

> As our children wailed in the shadow of the gallows
> The World's passion we did not hear
> For you chose us from all nations
> You loved and held us dear
>
> … And as our children march to the gallows
> Children Jewish, children wise
> They know their blood is not valued
> They call only to mother: avert your eyes
>
> While the ovens were fed by day and by night,
> The most Holy Father who dwells in Rome
> Did not leave his palace, with crucifix high
> To witness one day of pogrom
>
> Just to stand there, one day: 'I am here, I'm with you'–
> Where the child-lamb is standing, each day anew:
> The anonymous Child of a Jew

The poem clearly places a large part of the responsibility for the extermination of European Jewry on the failure of the bystanders – bystander nations and key individuals, epitomized in the figure of the Pope. Through invoking the theodicy of redemptive suffering, the Jewish child becomes the modern embodiment of another 'child-lamb'; the Lamb of God sanctified by the Church – Jesus Christ. The Children of Israel become by extension, in Alterman's poem and in this section of the Yad Vashem display, the sacrifice through which the war against Nazism was won. Rather than a disastrous consequence of Allied decision-making and, perhaps, indifference, the murder of the Jews becomes yet again a necessary conduit for vicarious atonement.

The moral message of these two sets of displays – the murder of the Jews at Auschwitz and the world's indifference to their fate – is further intensified through the placement of the section on partisan resistance immediately after this section. Again, it is not the relative importance

of the partisan story that is the issue at stake; rather, it is its placement at this point in the display that imbues it with metahistorical significance. The story of the partisans is an important and vital part of Holocaust history, but what is the effect of placing the display at this juncture? It might also have been positioned chronologically after the section on the invasion of the USSR and the mass shootings that signalled the beginning of the 'frenzy of killing' – a time when many partisan groups were formed in reaction to the escalation of war. The choice to display the partisan section *thematically* rather than chronologically lends a metahistorical rather than historical flavour to the exhibit – again, the Jew stands alone in the narrative arc of the exhibition.

The one exception to this rule is the several thousand 'Righteous Among the Nations' who empathized with the suffering of the Jews and, often at mortal risk, offered them protection.[98] As of 2007, there were over 22,000 'Righteous' acknowledged by Yad Vashem.[99] The category of 'Righteous' was developed in 1953 as part of the Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Law and defined as 'non Jews who risked their lives to rescue Jews'. The emphasis of the display is again thematic, the morality of the actions are emphasized rather than their historical context, as the following framing quotation makes clear:

> 'I know that when I stand before God on Judgement Day I shall not be asked the question posed to Cain, where were you when your brother's blood was crying out to God'
>
> (Imre Bathory, Righteous Among the Nations, Hungary)[100]

Directly after exiting this section of the exhibition, visitors return to the world of the camps with the emphasis this time being on the role of the camps as sites of forced labour. The Sinti and Roma peoples are mentioned in this context and the turning point of the Allied invasion of Europe (D-Day) is noted. Almost immediately, the display returns to the war against the Jews as the Death Marches are related in excruciating detail, followed by the liberation of Berlin by Russian forces. Allied victory is explicated but given little context as the emphasis of the display returns to the paradox of liberation for Europe's surviving Jews, epitomized in the words of US Army Chaplain Abraham Klausner:

> Liberated but not Free, that is the paradox of the Jew
>
> (Abraham Klausner, US Army Chaplain, Dachau, 24 June 1945)[101]

The horrifying footage of bodies being bulldozed into mass graves at Belsen is given retrospective and sacred meaning through the playing of the *kaddish* prayer, and is framed by the words of the liturgically inspired, 'The Last of the Just' by Andre Schwarz Bart.[102] Comprising segments from the traditional *kaddish*, but punctuated with the names of Europe's death and concentration camps, the excerpt further links the scenes of mass death to the traditional burial prayer – itself an acclamation of the greatness of God – a curatorial interpretation that again imbues a historical space with a transcendent and sacred meaning otherwise not readily apparent.

The metahistorical framework of Amalek that underscores the permanent exhibition comes to its climax in the final section of the display outlining the experience of the Displaced Person (DP) camps. As visitors enter the display, two large banners in Hebrew confront them. The banners are original artifacts saved by survivors of the DP camps. While they are translated into English in two small captions at the far right of the display (from the viewer's perspective), it is only a native or well-versed Hebrew speaker that will feel the immediate impact and symbolic resonance of the banners' message:

> 'Remember what Amalek did to you!'
>
> Unveiling of the memorial stones for the fallen camp inmates. Honor their memory!'
>
> 'Jews! Do not forget the victims among the Jewish people. Your participation in the unveiling of the memorial stones honors all 6,000,000 Jewish martyrs.'[103]

Through this fascinating choice and placement of artifacts, the curatorial and historical team bring the Holocaust story to its climax in an explicitly traditional mode. The modern enemy of Nazism is clothed in the traditional garb of the eternal enemy of Amalek. Underscored by closing displays on illegal immigration to Palestine, forced upon the survivors by the actions of the waning British Mandate, the abandonment of the Jews is only mitigated by the Jews' acts to save themselves, with the final exhibit showing excerpts not from the Nuremberg trials but from that of Eichmann. The latter, of course, is a well-known landmark in the development of Israeli Holocaust memory. It was an event that reverberated internationally, in which Eichmann was tracked down and kidnapped in Argentina and brought to Jerusalem to stand trial not for 'crimes against humanity' but for 'crimes against the Jewish people'[104] – a fitting ending to a Jewish story of the Holocaust.

While its final form might belie its contested origins, the decision of how to end the permanent exhibition was fiercely debated among Yad Vashem's historians. For many, the ending was again a battle fought primarily with the architecture. One historian noted that Safdie's 'redemptive architecture' sets up a false dichotomy – that the magnificent exit vista to a bustling Jerusalem 'somehow makes it look like the Jews of Europe won'. She notes, 'they did not win. They lost their families, their homes. Yes, some made new families and homes but not all.' Another historian commented that he would have ended the display not with the Eichmann trial but with the closing of the last DP camp. Yet another defended a redemptive ending, affirming that as Israelis 'we feel we are part of a miracle'. Even so, he pointed to a danger in this perspective, noting that to cast the Holocaust as the *raison d'être* for the continued existence of the state could breed a dangerous form of ethnocentrism. The same historian felt that the choice to end with the Eichmann trial rather than the birth of Israel ameliorated this perspective to some extent, but also admitted that the overwhelming power of Safdie's exit vista made a redemptive finale difficult to counteract in the main display.[105] The Jewish people indeed did not 'win' but in the NHM an eternal people survive once more.

These Bones are the Whole House of Israel

Upon exiting the historical section of the display, carpet replaces concrete underfoot, the floor begins to elevate slightly and visitors are imperceptibly lifted into the built embodiment of Ezekiel's vision as they enter the monumental Hall of Names. The Hall is described by its creator, Moshe Safdie, as 'an especially sacred place, within the sacred site of Yad Vashem'.[106] The space comprises two enormous cones, one stretching ten metres deep into the water table below and the other soaring above, upon which the photographs of hundreds of victims stare down, as if from the heavens, 'resurrected' if you will. The Hall also serves as an archive, housing the nearly three million known names of Holocaust victims – the collection of which is a central and ongoing component of Yad Vashem's mission.[107] Those Jews who had migrated from Europe before the war sought to gather the names of those they had known prior to their immigration. In 1955, the Israeli census also requested the submission of names of relatives who perished in the *Shoah*. Yet the Registry of Names was not given prominence in the physical site of Yad Vashem until its incorporation into the NHM. Indeed, it was placed at the perimeter of the site, far away from the

Figure 3.1 Yad Vashem new Historical Museum, Central axis

Figure 3.2 Yad Vashem new Historical Museum, Central axis

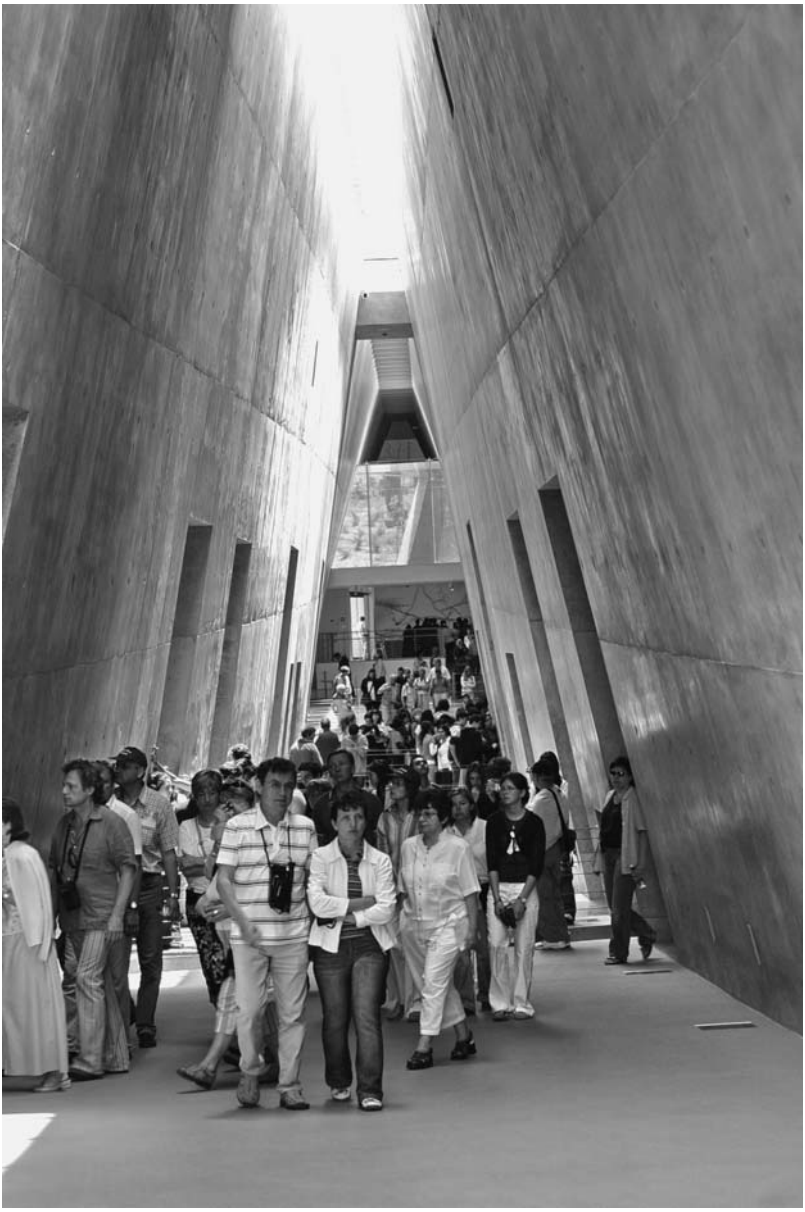

Figure 3.3 Yad Vashem new Historical Museum, Central axis

central museum and memorials. As such, its newly found prominence is a significant marker of the privileging of the victims' perspective in the main narrative of the NHM. Brought from periphery to centre in its new incarnation, the resonance of resurrection is inescapable both in the design and its connection to the final stage of the visitors' journey – Safdie's panoramic exit vista:

> Exiting the Hall, the visitor then ends the harrowing journey by emerging 'into light' as the museum display ends at the expansive vista of Jerusalem pine forests.[108]

Together, the Hall of Names and the geography of the museum's exit vista embody a built version of Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones – the central quotation of which, as noted, appears at the entry to the entire Yad Vashem complex.

> I will put my breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil.
>
> (Ezekiel 37:14)

Yet the culmination of the biblical verse, indeed of the entire prophetic vision, is conspicuous in its absence.

> 'Then you shall know that I the Lord have spoken and have acted' – declares the Lord.
>
> (Ezekiel 37:14)

In Safdie's design, a built theodicy is clearly apparent as the victims are resurrected and their suffering and that of the survivors is imbued with renewed and eternal meaning. Set within the holiest of Jewish cities, the mythic impulse embodied in the classical theodicies of Amalek, and Resurrection/Restoration saturate this site and its architecture, while the explicit theistic reference is removed. The sacred myths are recast in a secular framework of modern Zionism, meaning is bestowed upon suffering and the traumatic history of the Holocaust is redeemed without God. With Nazism cast as the transmigrated Amalek and Yad Vashem serving as the secular Ezekiel, the redemptive role of the institution has been both revived and amplified. In the NHM's ostensibly secular Jewish story, the memory of an exiled nation nearly destroyed comes to underpin the rationale for a nation returned and restored, but also to serve as a warning that the existential threat to the nation is similarly

Figure 3.4 Yad Vashem new Historical Museum, Hall of Names

eternal and therefore ever present. The connection between past and present, Diaspora and Israel has been realized, encapsulated in the following comment from the visitors' book, placed directly at the point of exit:

> 'Hope this never happens again. Peace also to Israel.' Dina[109]

Conclusion: A Particular Past

Yad Vashem's NHM was built within a social and political environment that had long struggled to comprehend the meaning of the Holocaust for the present. The memory of the Holocaust has infused Israeli public and private life since before the state's inception.[110] Its influence has waxed and waned according to the changing circumstances of the state but there can be no doubt that the memory of the Holocaust has emerged at the beginning of the twenty first century as an increasingly vital component of Israeli identity; so much so that it is not uncommon to find regular mention of the Holocaust in major Israeli newspapers where its moral imprimatur is routinely invoked to

Figure 3.5 Yad Vashem new Historical Museum, Hall of Names

provide support for or detract from a particular political platform.[111] These instances have ranged from the more blatant and distasteful, such as the use of yellow-orange Jewish stars during the 2005 disengagement from Gaza to the more thoughtful, yet also overtly political, such as MK Tzipi Livni's speech before President Bush in 2008 that she began with the words, 'To be a Jew is to dream about the Holocaust, live the Holocaust, and die the Holocaust – without actually having gone through it.'[112]

The historical formation and subsequent use of Holocaust memory across the spectrum of Israeli public life is a complex study in its own right.[113] However, to understand how the metahistorical archetypes underpinning the new Historical Museum comprise both a continuation and transformation of Israeli Holocaust memory, it is necessary to briefly sketch this memory's historical development, the contested interpretations of its origins and substance and its subsequent political efficacy. In so doing, the current, particularist emphasis of sacred Holocaust memory at Yad Vashem is brought into sharp focus but so too is the inherent flexibility of this metahistorical memory revealed.

Scholars have identified three major periods of transformation with regard to the emergence and instrumentalization of Holocaust memory in the Israeli context. Labelled 'divided', 'nationalized' and 'privatized' memory by one commentator,[114] they fall into the following broad chronological pattern: The first period is understood to have begun throughout the time of the Holocaust itself, during the era of the *Yishuv* in British Mandate Palestine; the second with the Eichmann trial and encompassing the tumultuous events of the 1967 War; and the third in the 1980s, a period characterized by historical debates that challenged the dominant Zionist ethos of the early state.

In the first period of 'divided memory', the Israeli public struggled to come to terms with the meaning of the Holocaust in the context of the fledgling state. Heroism and resistance were stressed while the vulnerability of European Jewry in the face of the Nazi onslaught was sidelined. In the second period, 'nationalized memory' served to narrow the divide between Israeli and Diaspora Jewry as 'never again' became the cornerstone of Israeli independence'.[115] In the third period, the 'privatization' of Holocaust memory involved an increased focus on individual experience, the recognition of all victims and survivors regardless of their status as resistor (or not). Each period was also heavily influenced by the impact of Israel's wars, the first by the war of 1948, the second by the Six Day War of 1967 and the third by more recent conflicts such as the two Lebanon Wars and Palestinian Intifadas.[116]

While scholars largely agree as to the *content* of Holocaust memory in each of these historical periods, no such consensus has emerged as to the political *use* or instrumentalization of this memory. These ongoing academic disputes are reflective of an ideological divide between those Israeli academics that have become known as 'New' (post Zionist) or 'Old' (Zionist) historians.[117] The differences between these two groups of scholars (not all of whom work primarily in the

historical field) can perhaps be most clearly seen in the debates regarding the first period of 'divided' Holocaust memory; in particular, the different interpretations that Old and New Historians tender regarding the *Yishuv* and Zionist leadership's attitude toward the rescue of European Jewry and the reception and integration of survivors into the fledgling state.

A consideration of the writings of historian Dina Porat and journalist Tom Segev bring the debate into sharp relief. Taken together, Porat's seminal study *The Blue and the Yellow Star of David: The Zionist Leadership in Palestine and the Holocaust, 1939*–1945[118] and Segev's bestselling *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* encompass two ends of the spectrum regarding the actions of the Zionist leadership during the Holocaust. Where Porat sees a beleaguered *Yishuv* leadership, completely out of its depth and hopelessly underresourced with regard to staging any significant rescue efforts in Nazi-occupied Europe, Segev perceives a pragmatic and callous leadership which envisages that the 'Nazi's victory would become a "fertile force" for Zionism'.[119] In Porat's vision, the news trickling through to *Yishuv* leaders regarding the extermination of European Jewry overwhelms an unprepared and non-sovereign community while in Segev's interpretation the suffering of Europe's Jews is only thought of by the Zionist leadership in relation to its possible utility to the nascent Jewish community in Palestine. For Segev, the *Yishuv*'s 'negation of the Diaspora' is tantamount to its betrayal whereas for commentators such as Porat negation cannot be equated with abandonment.[120]

Given the diametrically opposed conclusions at which these scholars arrive, Yachiam Weitz argues that the major difference between these two groups of historians lies in what he calls the 'nature' of their claims. Labelling the Zionist historians' view as 'dialectical' and the post-Zionist view as 'one-dimensional', Weitz describes the difference of approach in the following manner:

> According to Zionist historians, the *Yishuv* and Zionist movement leadership saw displaced Jews and Jewish refugees through a dual prism: as both a means and an end. … For example, rescue operations were an end – to save lives – but also a means, part of the Zionist mission to strengthen the *Yishuv* and establish Jewish sovereignty. … the single basic contention of the New Historians, on the other hand, is that the approach of the *Yishuv* and the Zionist leadership was single-minded, that they regarded themselves as the supreme goal and their attitude toward European Jewry was purely

> instrumental – they were a tool or means to realize and reinforce the *Yishuv* and Zionist aims.[121]

One can discern a similar difference of interpretation in the scholarly material with regard to the integration (or not) of survivors in early attempts at national commemoration, including the efforts of those who sought to unify national commemoration through the establishment and building of Yad Vashem. The dominant metahistorical frameworks in which early commemorations were formed, *m'Shoah l'Tkumah* (*Destruction to Rebirth*) and *Shoah V'Gvurah* (*Holocaust and Heroism*), appear to marginalize the individual survivor. The survivor became visible in the ideologically charged atmosphere of 1950s Israel only as a heroic resistor, therefore relegating to the sidelines those survivors and victims that did not fit this early Zionist vision. That this metahistorical framework constitutes the dominant image of Yad Vashem's early displays and memorials seems beyond question. Yet, it is how one *interprets* the reasons for and use of these frameworks is the all-important point. A New Historian approach highlights the pragmatic political utility of the heroic survivor/resistor to the early Zionists' vision, interpreting, for example, Mordechi Shenhavi's desire to 'teach … that our brothers were not led like 'lambs to the slaughter' as a clear example of the early Zionists' desire to 'show the value of war for Jewish and human honor'.[122] An Old Historian interpretation, while acknowledging the same dominant paradigms for early Holocaust commemoration, understands this proclivity to be the result of the Zionist leadership's vision of European Jewry as 'both the other and our own'. From an Old Historian perspective, the complementary frameworks of Holocaust and Heroism and *Shoah* to Rebirth incorporated 'the survivors into the Israeli/Ashkenazi hegemony, but at the same time it constructed them as its "others"'.[123] For 'while the *Yishuv* saw the Holocaust as the ultimate proof of diaspora passivity, indeed, of diaspora shame … at the same time, another, different aspect stood out: the *Yishuv's* sense of duty toward Diaspora Jewry'.[124]

These competing perspectives are indicative of the broad shape of the debate that continues to rage over the utility of Holocaust memory in the Israeli sphere. The New Historians contend that the Holocaust became an important memory in Israel only when it could serve the needs of the state and its Zionist ethos. In contrast, the Old Historians perceive a mix of pragmatism and compassion in the emergence of Holocaust memory as an influential component of Israeli national identity. What is striking, however, about both Old and New interpretations

of the three periods of Holocaust memory is the predominantly *particularistic* shape of this memory within *both* schools of thought. In other words, the dominant political framework within which Holocaust memory has been formed in Israel has been an *internal* one – a memory that has been connected almost exclusively with the demands of the state – whether that be through an emphasis on a right, left or centrist political position. While this proclivity might appear 'natural' when considering the potential utility of a Jewish tragedy within the confines of a Jewish state, it is only natural insofar as one accepts that there is no universalistic element to Jewish identity or indeed to Israeli nationalism. Yet there is no logical or deterministic reason as to why this should be the case as Jewish identity from ancient times has always contained both universal and particularistic components.

Nevertheless, time and again it is the particularistic aspect of Holocaust memory that comes to the fore in Israeli public life. The extreme right instrumentalize Holocaust memory to frame the Arab enemy as Nazism's most recent incarnation, while the extreme left attributes such demagoguery to the use of Israeli military force. Thus, even in the writings of the New Historians the major emphasis is on Israel's relations with the Palestinians – relegating the power of Holocaust memory to largely internal affairs.[125] Indeed, the last major attempt to emphasize the universal lessons of the Holocaust in the Israeli context was a special edition of the leftist monthly *Politika* in 1986. Entitled *Israelis and the Holocaust: How to Remember and How Not to Forget*,[126] the publication 'concluded that the Left has to formulate its own memory of the Holocaust, one that emphasizes its universal and humanist lessons and accords them a central place in Israeli collective memory'.[127] This task has seemingly fallen to the wayside as the major preoccupation of those New Historians on the left of the Israeli political spectrum has been to enter into a 'competitive' use of Holocaust memory vis-à-vis its political utility in Israel's ongoing territorial disputes. Combined with the defensive stance of the Old Historians, a stalemate is clearly evident in the use of Holocaust memory in the Israeli context – one in which the particularistic aspect of this memory is seemingly the only aspect at stake for all involved.

An exception to this particularistic proclivity is found in Avraham Burg's polemical but powerful study, *The Holocaust is Over: We Must Rise from Its Ashes*.[128] While Burg clearly engages in the use of Holocaust memory to further his own, largely left-wing political agenda, he also explicitly outlines his vision of what a universal Israeli Holocaust memory might entail. Noting the conspicuous absence of exhibitions about

other genocides at Yad Vashem, the ongoing ambivalence in the Israeli political establishment regarding full recognition of the Armenian genocide due to strategic political ties with Turkey, and historical episodes such as the public outcry against Hannah Arendt's more universalistic interpretation of Eichmann's crimes in her now-classic coverage of the landmark trial, Burg gives voice to the near absence of the universalistic elements of Judaism in contemporary manifestations of Holocaust memory in Israel.[129] He remains, however, clearly in the minority in this regard as Israeli Holocaust memory has become more and more a self-referential exercise.[130]

Given this largely particularist backdrop, where is Yad Vashem's NHM placed on the 'universal/particular' continuum of Israeli Holocaust memory? Further, how has the displays' deployment of the metahistorical archetype of Amalek (as uncovered in the preceding section) altered the redemptive and restorative vision that animated Holocaust memory at Yad Vashem from the outset? As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the building of this massive structure was itself recognition of the growth and influence of Holocaust memory in Israeli society – a radical contrast to the humble and contested beginnings of the institution in the nascent state context of the early 1950s. Within the exhibition, the emphasis on the individual Jew and the diversity of the Jewish experience clearly illustrates the displays' affinity with the individualized tropes of commemoration prevalent in the latest, 'privatized' phase of Israeli Holocaust memory. Viewed from this perspective, the NHM has certainly achieved its central goals; it presents a far more inclusive and individualized account of the destruction of European Jewry; it no longer utilizes the memory of the Holocaust as a negation of the Diaspora, but rather cultivates a view of the precariousness of Jewish life that can be identified with by both Diaspora Jews and Israelis alike and, finally, it lifts the Holocaust experience out of its historical specificity, allowing the concerns of European Jewry to resound across time and resonate with contemporary concerns.

However, in Yad Vashem's most recent metahistorical reworking of its original vision of redemption and resurrection, it is not a prophetic vision of national restoration leading to universal salvation that comes to the fore. Rather, the secular redemption embodied in the architecture and displays of the NHM are underscored by a particularistic interpretation of the Amalek myth that can only serve to place the People Israel alone amongst the nations, dependent only on itself for survival and forever vigilant against an eternal and ruthless enemy. Truly a 'people that dwells apart' (Numbers 23:9). However, the command to 'utterly

blot out the memory from Amalek from under heaven' (Exodus 17:14) was never completely fulfilled within the Bible itself, nor have the resulting interpretations ever endorsed this proposition fully. Instead, interpretation of the Amalek myth in the Jewish tradition has been characterized by constant tension and debate, its symbolic function to highlight instances of good and evil, and to place the historical into a metahistorical framework in which the events of history meet the demands of morality – fusing the historical and the ethical. The pivotal question is, therefore, to what *use* has and will this sacred memory be put? Will it remain a largely particularist concern or can it be broadened to incorporate a more universalistic memory of the Holocaust in the Israeli context? Certainly, in its current incarnation, where Israel comes to symbolize the unchanging good but Amalek/Nazism remains a symbol in flux, able to be attached to the most recent real or perceived enemy, a marked proclivity toward a particularistic use of Holocaust memory seems the inevitable result.

Without an explicitly universal horizon, the transformation engendered by Yad Vashem's current deployment of Holocaust memory will inevitably refract inward, toward the Jewish world. Indeed, in this particularistic interpretation of the Amalek archetype, a radical reversal of the relationship between Israeli and Diaspora Jewry is achieved – a reversal that, while finally achieving Yad Vashem's founders' goal of unifying the two entities, has also served to reverse their relative strength and security. Holocaust commemoration in the *Yishuv* and early state sought to assimilate Diaspora Jewry into an Israeli memory of the Holocaust that stressed the heroism and might of the Zionist vision – propagating sovereignty as the only solution to the kind of Diaspora catastrophe the Holocaust epitomized. In its current incarnation, the myth of Amalek in the NHM transforms the precariousness that for the early Zionist movement typified Diaspora existence into the quotidian experience of the modern Israeli state – thus embracing the very condition that modern Zionism sought to eliminate. The state is no longer an assurance of 'never again', rather its existence is predicated on the belief of 'ever again' and the concomitant need to remain eternally vigilant against an eternal, if changing, enemy.

In this particularist interpretation of the Amalek myth, redemption and restoration can also be a solely internal affair, a posture seemingly at odds with Yad Vashem's stated mission:

> Every visitor leaves Yad Vashem with a personal impression of an event that has universal dimensions. The new museum complex

> reinforces the commitment of Jewish visitors to their people and their ethical brotherhood with other nations. Non-Jewish visitors will empathize with the fate of the Jewish people, and will be inspired to join the drive to a more humane future for humanity as a whole.[131]

While such sentiments may indeed be deduced, they cannot be assured given the resoundingly particularistic emphasis of the NHM's permanent display. A more universalistic interpretation of the ancient archetype of Amalek, underscored by a *kabbalistic* and symbolic interpretation that demands moral reflection and vigilance from all, may yet serve to open up new possibilities for the use of Holocaust memory in the Israeli national context. Perhaps then Yad Vashem's mission of national restoration could be truly linked to a vision of universal redemption as epitomized by the Hebrew poet David Shimoni:

> The oppressor, the Amalekite essence that exists in all generations fights justice, fights us, and aims not only to exterminate us but also to obliterate the mark of God from the face of the universe.[132]

4
A Redeemer Cometh: The Survivor in the Space

> Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the pit from which you were dug up (Isaiah 51: 1)
>
> 'The rock from which you were hewn' – millenniums [sic] of Jewish history and tradition which shaped our peoplehood – 'and the pit from which you were dug up' – the 'Final Solution' aimed at the total destruction of the Jewish people.
>
> (Marika Weinberger, *Opening of the Sydney Jewish Museum,* 18 November 1992[1])

Introduction

In her speech at the opening of the Sydney Jewish Museum (SJM), Holocaust survivor and then President of the Australian Association for Jewish Holocaust Survivors (AAJHS), Marika Weinberger, explicitly referenced Isaiah 51:1 as the 'motivating spirit guiding the architects, curators, designers and our planning committee in establishing the terms of reference, guidelines, blueprints and, at times, in deciding even minute details of this unique museum'.[2] Just how influential this directive was in the actual development of the SJM's exhibition and memorial spaces is impossible to determine, but its significance regarding the museum founders' understanding of their task is readily apparent. For this was to be a museum in which Jewish tradition would be modified and reinterpreted by those who understood themselves to be simultaneously the product of, and the exception to, the tradition itself. Against this backdrop the story of destruction would be told from the perspective of those who had endured it. In the telling, the figure of the survivor would emerge as the SJM's 'authentic voice', the voice of

both the witness and the victim, an embodied testament to the 'living and the dead'.[3]

From its inception, therefore, the 'telling' of the Holocaust at the SJM was recounted from a survivor perspective that was at once equated with a singular 'true' or 'historical' rendering.[4] For example, when queried on the potential for a Holocaust exhibition to speak to other historical events, the SJM's first curator, Sylvia Rosenblum, emphatically stated, 'One cannot use the Holocaust to tell other stories'.[5] Clearly, from Rosenblum's perspective, there was only one story to tell: a Holocaust museum should aim to 'tell the story of the Holocaust simply, truthfully and honestly so that it would never happen again'.[6] She characterized such an approach as a 'survivor attitude to memorialization of the Holocaust',[7] and defined this perspective as consisting of:

> The desire and/or need to fulfill the Jewish injunction to remember – *zachor* – and the desire or need to bear witness. These factors were paramount in the establishment of the Sydney Jewish Museum. Unlike its counterparts around the world, its memorialization of the Holocaust, therefore, is private, personal and Jewish and has not been subjected to the problems of institutionalization, and politicization of state-owned or state-subsidized museums.[8]

One might reasonably wonder why, if the central goal of memorialization at the SJM was 'private, personal and Jewish', the task of building a *public* museum was undertaken in the first place?[9] Rosenblum's characterization of the complex undertaking of exhibition development and design as the curatorial equivalent of *wie es eigentlich gewesen*[10] belies the social, historical and political context within which the SJM emerged, the influence of key protagonists and the very process of exhibition practice – which is, by definition, one of selection and interpretation. An exhibition, like any other historical text, is influenced by a variety of factors; choice of artifacts (sources), narrative shape, the perspective of those who create the exhibition and the space in which the display is ultimately placed all contribute to its final form. Rosenblum's characterization of the SJM's permanent exhibition as constituting a simple reflection of a pre-existing 'survivor attitude' masks several factors, key among these being what, exactly, such an attitude entails. Hence what 'kind' of survivor built the SJM is left both assumed and unexplored. Uncovering what this survivor attitude encompasses, and how it comes to shape the metahistorical

and sacred underpinnings of the Holocaust memory on display at the SJM, forms the focal point of this chapter.

The central role of Jewish survivors as founders and creators of the SJM is outlined and their understanding of the institution's importance as a non-traditional, but still Jewish space is addressed. The overwhelming influence of the survivor population is established through a close reading of the survivors' involvement in the development and final shape of the SJM's original permanent exhibition and the dedicated memorial space of the Sanctum of Remembrance, alongside its ritual use. What becomes apparent is how the commemorative desires of the survivors largely dictated how the history of the Holocaust at the SJM would be told. In this public commemorative space, traditional Jewish responses to destruction were reformulated from a lay perspective, informed more by personal and communal loss than by commitment to a systematic and explicitly theological worldview. This grassroots sacred memory was – and continues to be – conveyed to the broader public through built structures and associated commemorative days that originate within the Jewish tradition but undergo modification to engage a wider audience. With the passing of the survivor generation, the *meaning* of their experience and its broader, public applicability has become the central question around which current debates as to the future direction of the institution continue to revolve.

In their centrality to the planning, development and even the future direction of the SJM, the survivor as 'redemptive sufferer' emerges as the determining metahistorical archetype of the institution's sacred Holocaust memory. In uncovering these metahistorical foundations, what is revealed is a progression in which the SJM's 'private, personal and Jewish' survivors move from being the victims and witnesses of a particularly Jewish tragedy to universal symbols of suffering, the embodiment of human confrontation with mass death and trauma in the modern age. The ancient and enduring theodicy of redemptive suffering is evidenced in both the Jewish and Christian traditions. In this chapter it is traced in a variety of historical manifestations from its roots in the Hebrew Bible, to its rabbinic and medieval expressions, and is also considered in its radical reshaping in the Christian tradition in the figure of Jesus. In the post-war period I argue that this archetype continues to underpin, in a sublimated and non-theistic form, popular representations of both Holocaust victims and survivors, exemplified in two of the most famous literary works of the Holocaust literary canon, *The Diary of Anne Frank* and Elie Wiesel's *Night*. What is demonstrated through an analysis of these works is that the victim/survivor as

redemptive sufferer is created as much by the environment into which his or her story is received as by the story itself. The ancient archetype is continually reworked in a vastly changed public context.

In placing their 'private, personal and Jewish' suffering in public space, the SJM's Jewish survivors, its 'redemptive sufferers', faced both a contradiction and a challenge. The public nature of museum and memorial space would serve to affirm the survivors' insistence on the 'exceptionality' of their experience – in contrast with previous Jewish destructions. For unlike those earlier instances, their suffering could not and *would not* be contained within traditional and largely internal Jewish frameworks. Yet, as soon as this suffering was removed from the overwhelmingly archetypical and covenantal framework of traditional Jewish responses to destruction, the 'Jewishness' that survivors also wished to maintain would necessarily be modified through its placement in public and therefore inherently syncretic space. A seemingly irreconcilable contradiction emerged: if this memory was only 'private, personal and Jewish', then why place it in public and universal space? But if this memory was also 'exceptional', in contrast to previous Jewish destructions, then pre-existing, traditional forms of Jewish commemoration could not guarantee its conveyance, as its extraordinary nature necessitated the creation of new spaces and rituals. The survivors' original demand that their experience be understood and displayed as both 'exceptional' *and* 'Jewish' therefore presents a challenge to traditional Jewish responses to destruction but also forces a confrontation and re-evaluation of the boundaries of this Jewish memory in its public context. In other words, what are the 'universal limits' of this 'particular' but also 'exceptional' memory once placed in public space?

For unlike the USHMM, where survivors' demands would be subordinated to a universalistic imperative to assimilate the Holocaust's 'Jewish core' into existing national narratives, or Yad Vashem, where the survivor experience would be considered primarily in relation to the changing and largely particularistic demands of a Jewish state, the intensely private nature of the survivors' vision at the SJM would only be challenged by the reality that in order to retain their popular appeal memorial museums are increasingly under pressure to maintain their 'contemporary relevance'. Exactly what such relevance entailed was not explicitly articulated in the SJM's original configuration. During its first two decades of existence, debates concerning the universal dimensions of Holocaust memory were largely understood as diminishing rather than amplifying both the 'exceptional' and 'Jewish' nature of the Holocaust memory housed at the SJM. As a result, the museum's

ability to maintain its contemporary relevance remained stymied. This impasse continues to frame debates regarding the institutions' development to the present, despite the fact that the universal relevance of Holocaust memory is increasingly invoked in Australian public discourse.[11]

Now in its third decade, the SJM recently embarked on a major redevelopment of its permanent exhibition, scheduled to open in late 2016.[12] The planned new permanent Holocaust exhibition and dedicated 'Holocaust and Human Rights' section will constitute an explicit articulation of the universalistic resonance of the SJM's historically particularistic memory. It will also mark a significant moment in the intergenerational transfer of memory, as its contours and final shape will be determined largely not by the survivors themselves but by their descendants. Forced to confront the linked challenges of contemporary and universal relevance, the SJM's redemptive sufferers, its Jewish survivors, will by necessity be transformed once more by those who will interpret their memory for future generations. In order to achieve this transformation, I posit that a conceptual development in which the SJM's 'exceptional' memory is not confused with an 'exclusive' one is necessary. Yet, in order to remain true to its founders' vision, such a transformation will only be achieved if the universality of this exceptional memory can be realized without jettisoning its particular origins. Such a complex development can only be achieved through a conceptual framework in which universality and universalism are not conflated. For while universalism requires an obliteration or flattening of a particularistic memory, universality entails a recognition and articulation of that memory's global resonance. Understood in this manner, I maintain that universality comprises as authentic a component of Jewish memory as particularity. Such an approach, it is argued, also echoes and extends recent developments in theoretical debates about Holocaust memory and its efficacy, providing an alternate lens through which to view these ongoing deliberations.

Currently, the task of delineating and maintaining the tension between the particular experience and the universal relevance of this 'private, personal and Jewish' memory – a mission that the SJM's founders began, but one that now must be taken up by their descendants – remains a project in flux. The survivors' original wish for their suffering to be remembered as 'exceptional' defied the largely archetypical propensity of traditional Jewish commemorative strategies. Yet in realizing this objective, the fluid and multilayered public context into which this exceptional memory was received ensured that the demands

and memories of others also played a role in this memory's progression. This chapter comprises, therefore, an exploration as to how this public framework has been and will be embraced. In so doing it asks and attempts to answer the question of how robust the underlying metahistorical and sacred roots of this institution are. In other words, it explores the potential for the SJMs redemptive sufferers speak *of and beyond* their experience in the Australian public sphere. Exactly what and whom *can and will* the SJM's redemptive sufferers redeem?

Extraordinary History, Inadequate Theology

Australia's Holocaust memorial museums were founded and funded by Jewish survivors as centres for remembrance and research.[13] This historical setting stands in sharp contrast to the majority of international sites, which are seldom solely Jewish in derivation; in fact, more often than not they are funded and run by state authorities. Further, the Australian survivors' choice to situate communal remembrance in a public context also distinguishes it from traditional Jewish commemorative forms that have historically been centred in text and ritual and enacted largely in the synagogue and home. In the public commemorative space of the SJM, traditional Jewish responses to destruction were reformulated from a lay perspective, informed by personal and communal loss; a far cry from the explicit theological considerations that preoccupied, for example, the founders of the USHMM. Yet, as Emil Fackenheim astutely observed such developments can be important indicators of lay theologies, noting that ' …in our time, Jewish life is in advance of Jewish thought … Jewish life itself ... is in the grip of, and responding to, epoch making events'.[14]

Perhaps due to its somewhat heterodox beginnings, the commemorative focus of the SJM has been underexamined in the scholarly literature concerned with the development of Holocaust memory in the Australian context. Scholars have largely attributed the increase in Australian Holocaust commemoration over the past forty years to a desire within the Jewish survivor population to combat Holocaust denial.[15] In the original 'Proposal for the Establishment of a Jewish Holocaust Museum in Sydney', however, this is only one of many factors cited as a motivation to begin such a project. The Australian Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors (AAJHS), established in 1983, compiled the report after a year-long process of deliberation by a working group formed for this express purpose. The committee met on ten occasions between March and September 1986 to discuss the desirability and

feasibility of building a permanent Holocaust exhibition in Sydney and the proposed contents of such an institution.[16] Discussion centred on:

1 Rationale and Philosophy
2 The Collection
3 Administration
4 Location[17]

The 'Rationale and Philosophy' was primarily concerned with establishing the reasons for undertaking such a project, the 'need' for a Holocaust museum in Sydney, the 'role' such a museum would play, its intended audience and the overall philosophy or approach of the proposed institution. The need to combat Holocaust denial is mentioned,[18] but it remains only one point among many and, given the overwhelming memorial intent of the SJM and its ongoing commemorative function, cannot be understood to be its sole motivating factor.

The 'Rationale and Philosophy' stresses the importance of the museum as a collecting institution. The availability of material culture pertaining to the Holocaust within the Sydney Jewish community is noted alongside the need to collect such memorabilia and make it 'available to the public'.[19] There is a sense of urgency in this mission: if the collecting process did not begin imminently 'the memorabilia of survivors, many of whom are elderly, will be scattered, simply discarded or lost'.[20] Notably, throughout the report there is no mention of the idea of collecting outside of the Jewish community,[21] or any discussion of a private–public partnership that has characterized the building of many Holocaust museums internationally.[22] Rather, from the outset, the SJM was to be a private venture, initiated from within the Jewish community and reliant upon community funds, human resources and memorabilia.

Another significant factor cited for the emergence of an organized Holocaust commemorative body within the Jewish community was the shift to multiculturalism as official government policy in Australia in the 1970s, a political development that generated greater confidence and pride in ethnic identity.[23] Indeed, the *Proposal* states that, 'In today's multicultural society, it is imperative that material evidence of one of Australia's significant ethnic minorities be housed in a permanent institution.'[24] This factor, combined with others such as increased international interest in Holocaust commemoration, epitomized in the First International Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Jerusalem in 1981, and the emergence of popular representation of the Holocaust

like the mini-series *Holocaust* in the 1970s, all influenced the rise of public Australian commemorations. No doubt, all these developments impacted the beginnings of organized Holocaust commemoration in Australia, but the *Proposal* does not stress a 'celebration' of this shift in Australia's political milieu, nor does it connect Holocaust memory to safeguarding the rights of minorities in multicultural society. Moreover, no explicit link is made to the history of Aboriginal persecution in Australia. While the advent of the SJM occurs well before the rise in popular Australian national consciousness regarding the persecution of Australia's indigenous population (which was to come to light most powerfully in the *Bringing Them Home* report of 1997), knowledge of the murder and dispossession of Australia's indigenous peoples was known but remained unaddressed. Neither is a connection made to dominant forms of Australian national commemoration like ANZAC[25] or the folk idea of a 'Fair Go' – all perspectives that one might expect of an 'Australianization' of the Holocaust.

Despite this lack of a nationalist framework for Holocaust memory at the SJM, Australia is certainly part of the museum's narrative. In keeping with its founders overall vision, the national context is considered primarily from the survivor perspective. As the original SJM catalogue stated:

> Its [SJM's] second function is as a celebration of Jewish life in Australia, where opportunities have been given regardless of religion, and where many [survivors] have succeeded in ways that would have been unimaginable elsewhere.[26]

Australia is celebrated for the freedom and prosperity it had given survivors, a perspective reinforced by the shift toward multiculturalism in Australia's immigration policy. However, unlike the demands of state memory so clearly evident in Holocaust museums internationally, the private nature of the SJM with regard to both its organizing committee and financial backing allowed a less state-driven narrative to emerge. Australia thus provides a national but not nationalistic or *etatist* context for the Holocaust, allowing the survivor experience to remain the central defining frame in both the planning and execution of the SJM. Indeed, the possibility that the SJM exhibition might attempt to recast the Holocaust experience through a nationalist mould is never explicitly mentioned in this foundational document.

Nonetheless, the *Proposal* does contain humanist elements that evince a desire to address Holocaust memory to non-Jewish Australians.

A Holocaust museum, it says, stands as 'a warning against circumstances which give rise to the dehumanization of minorities, leading to genocide',[27] and notes that while 'attitudes towards the Holocaust will be set within the context of antisemitism generally', the Holocaust will also be set 'within the context of persecution of minority groups'.[28] Even so, these universalistic sentiments are not explicitly addressed or developed further. In the *Proposal,* it is evident that the particular story of the Holocaust will address universal issues through inference rather than direct connection or the contextualization of the Holocaust into a pre-existing 'humanistic' framework. Instead, 'by highlighting the potential for evil in a totalitarian regime, it [SJM] will promote commitment to democracy and freedom'. On this basis, the committee asserts that a 'project of such worth and lasting impact deserves the support of the Jewish and, indeed, the general communities'.[29]

It cannot be assumed, therefore, that 'other stories' would be told in the yet-to-be-realized museum. But the lack of an explicit directive in this regard does not mean that the museum's 'Holocaust story' did not privilege a particular perspective nor seek to display Holocaust history toward a particular end. Rather, it is an indication that written sources and statements are insufficient to gauge the shape of Holocaust memory at the SJM. In addition to a consideration of foundational documents, the space itself must be read as a document of intent, its inclusions *and* exclusions giving voice to the perspective in which this particular Holocaust story was conceived. In so doing, we uncover not only what kind of 'survivor attitude' shapes Holocaust memory at the SJM, but the sacred and redemptive character of that memory. Once revealed, the implications of a survivor-based approach to Holocaust memory both in the Jewish and in the wider Australian community can be readily assessed.

The SJM is housed in the Maccabean Hall, known colloquially as the 'Macc'.[30] The building, opened formally on Armistice Day 1923 by the Australian-Jewish war hero Sir John Monash, also houses the New South Wales Jewish War Memorial. There was general agreement within the community at the time of building that a living communal centre would be the best way to commemorate those who served in the Great War. The walls of the forecourt are inscribed with names of nearly 3,000 Jewish Australian service people, including 177 who died serving in the Australian forces in the First and Second World Wars.[31] From its very beginnings, therefore, the Macc was a container of both sacred and secular history, commemorating the Jewish war dead and also acting as a 'cabinet of curiosities' with the creation of a 'time capsule', sealed

behind the cornerstone to be opened at the building's centenary, containing coins, newspapers, and other memorabilia.

The centre quickly achieved its goal, becoming a vital part of Jewish life in Sydney. As the original SJM catalogue recounts:

> The Macc instantly became a vibrant centre. There were meetings, dances, debates, revues, plays, movies, a library and a gymnasium. The hall housed High Holy Days services and a community Seder service at Passover. A singularly important flow-on effect was that countless marriages resulted from people meeting at The Macc.[32]

In 1965, the building was remodelled as the 'N.S.W. Jewish War Memorial Community Centre', with the focus changing from social events and activities to community administration. The arrival after the Second World War into Australia of the largest number of Holocaust survivors per capita to any nation except Israel profoundly changed the landscape of the Australian Jewish community. The survivors became involved in and central to all aspects of communal life and, in tandem with developments internationally, their need to recount and document their experiences became progressively more urgent as public consciousness concerning the Holocaust increased in the late 1970s and 1980s.[33] Subsequently, the Macc was again redesigned and refurbished and, in 1992, the Sydney Jewish Museum was officially opened.[34]

The choice to house the SJM in a pre-existing communal and memorial building stands in stark contrast to the building of purpose-built Holocaust museums in the US, Israel and Europe and further illustrates the particularistic and commemorative focus of the institution's founders. Despite these factors, as noted, the sacred and commemorative purpose of the institution has been largely overlooked in the scholarly literature.[35] This factor could be attributed to the explicit mentioning of this commemorative role only once in the *Proposal*,[36] but could also indicate that the original proposal was developed prior to the transition of leadership to Hungarian survivor John Saunders. Saunders commandeered the project in 1989 as the museum's founder and, at its outset, sole benefactor. For him the Jewish and memorial intent of the project was clear; he wanted to build a *yiddishe* museum.[37]

From the beginning, therefore, the Jewish survivor experience was dominant in developing and implementing the narrative and content of the museum space. As the original SJM catalogue proclaimed, this was to be a museum that would serve as 'a tribute to survivors, perpetuating the truth through their eyes and in their words'.[38] The display at the

SJM bears witness to this imperative. Despite this focus, the survivors determined that the SJM not be exclusively a Holocaust museum. Unlike the majority of Holocaust museums internationally, in which Jewish culture and tradition, if present at all, is contained within a European 'World that Was', the very name of the Sydney Jewish Museum bespeaks the dual purpose of the building, its displays and memorial spaces: to celebrate Jewish history and life in Australia, and to commemorate the Holocaust. Even so, there is a clear distinction between the 'Jewish' and the 'Holocaust' sections of the display. The permanent exhibition on the ground floor, *Culture and Continuity: Journey through Judaism,* refurbished in 2008 but retaining in large part the thematic structure of the original 1992 display, centres around a long range timeline of Jewish history, displays about Judaism, Jewish traditions and cultures and Australian Jewish history. While the Holocaust is included in the ground-floor timeline display, the detailed Holocaust exhibition only begins on the first floor of the exhibition.

A central void, in the unmistakable shape of a Star of David, dominates the entire permanent exhibition space. This symbolic space was reinforced by the retiling of the floor in Jerusalem stone during the 2008 refurbishment and can be viewed from every part of the original permanent exhibition.[39] The development committee unanimously decided upon the Star, the brainchild of Sydney architect Michael Bures, before the permanent Holocaust exhibition itself was conceived.[40] Spiralling upward, the Star creates a mezzanine of balconies within which the permanent exhibition unfolds. Viewed from a variety of aspects, the Star can be understood as either whole or broken, serving as a framing metaphor for both the Holocaust (broken) and the Jewish (whole) aspects of the exhibition. Its particularistic symbolic and commemorative resonance is immediately recognizable. The Star continues to function as de facto memorial space witnessed by its continued use for public commemoration,[41] its commemorative role reaffirmed in numerous discussions during the 2008 upgrade of the ground floor permanent exhibition, as well as more recent discussions and documents relating to the current redevelopment of the permanent Holocaust exhibition. In both cases the exhibition advisory committees affirmed that the central space must be retained in its original form as much as possible.[42]

Conceived and installed according to the demands of the central Star void, the original permanent exhibition contained a straightforward, chronological exposition of the Holocaust. Due to initial concerns about survivor sensitivities, no film footage of Nazi rallies,[43] or Nazi

uniforms, were displayed, and it is still museum policy that no Nazi artifacts were to be purchased for fear of inadvertently supporting a black market in Nazi paraphernalia. The original exhibition recounted the events of the Holocaust through a largely 'intentionalist paradigm',[44] beginning with an exposition of the history of antisemitism, the rise to power of the Nazi Party, the outbreak of war and the harrowing process of discrimination, ghettoization, transport and extermination of European Jewry. Additional spaces, developed over the course of the museum's functioning, focused on resistance,[45] the liberation of the camps, Righteous Among the Nations, migration and resettlement in Israel and Australia. The memorial spaces; The Children's Memorial, dedicated to the 1.5 million Jewish children murdered in the Holocaust; an electronic photo memorial; and the Sanctum of Remembrance complete the main exhibition. The memorial spaces will not undergo significant change in the current redevelopment.

In various speeches and publications either directly for or about the SJM, survivors speak of their involvement in the building and the ongoing functioning of the SJM as a 'sacred task' or 'holy cause'.[46] While such language has indeed become ubiquitous in Holocaust memorialization, it is worth taking into account the survivors' reverence for the task at hand. While it is questionable as to whether individual survivors would be able to define exactly what such a 'sacred task' might entail, the central point is that they consider their involvement on some level to be sacrosanct – a sacred mission that could not, and would not, be contained within the traditional spatial confines of existing Jewish commemorations.

A dispute between the established pre-war Jewish community and the survivors about the need for a Holocaust museum makes clear the survivors' desire for a dedicated commemorative space. Strongly anglophile in its outlook prior to the coming of the refugees,[47] the established Australian Jewish community was not, at first, predisposed to the idea of a Holocaust memorial museum in Sydney. Once convinced, it was only amenable to such a suggestion if the funding, planning and development was sourced solely from the survivor community.[48] Marika Weinberger, a founding member of the Australian Association for Jewish Holocaust Survivors (AAJHS), its President from 1990 to 1999, life member of the SJM Board and its Vice President until her death in 2014, recalls this somewhat tense relationship as a motivating factor in the survivors' determination to build a place in which they could tell their stories and remember their dead.[49] This feeling did not completely dissipate with the opening of the museum – the 11 June 1993 Committee of

Management (COM) minutes, for example, explicitly note the 'need for Museum to be perceived by the community as their museum.'[50]

Weinberger also refutes the notion that Holocaust denial can be attributed as the central reason for the massive effort over many years that it took to establish the Sydney Jewish Museum, stating that is was 'ridiculous … to think that we would do this to try and excuse ourselves for their lies'.[51] Rather, she points to the fact that despite the traditional commemorations already existent in the Sydney community, such as synagogue plaques, 'there was no place' for remembrance. For Weinberger and other survivors, the Museum was, and is, 'a cemetery, a grave, a synagogue, a Hall of Remembrance',[52] Konrad Kwiet, Resident Historian of the SJM since its inception, and Chief Historian for the Australian War Crimes trials, concurs with this view and notes that, alongside Holocaust denial, other external factors, like the war crimes[53] trials, did not feature predominantly in the survivors' desire to see the museum built. In fact, many survivors were not publicly supportive of the trials, fearing that they would trigger an increase of antisemitic sentiment in Australia.[54]

Thus, while the commemorative aspect of the SJM was apparent early on in its planning, it has not been systematically examined and nor have its implications clearly understood. This neglect can be attributed to several factors, but key among these is that the approach to commemoration at the museum was and remains unsystematic. Unlike Holocaust museums abroad,[55] the lay-led SJM planning committees did not include theologians or even rabbinic authorities. Weinberger notes that explicit advice was sought from rabbis only in specific instances – for example, if a perceived conflict between Jewish law and the commemorative needs of the moment became apparent.

One such example was the 1995 commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Europe's concentration camps.[56] The commemoration, *Australia Remembers 1945–1995*, was a gala affair, held at the Sydney Opera House and attended by political luminaries from both within and without the Australian Jewish community. However, the date for the commemoration, chosen to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of Allied victory in Europe, fell within the Counting of the *Omer*, a time of protracted mourning in remembrance of the martyrdom of Rabbi Akiva's students and a time where, according to *halacha*, no music is to be played. An uneasy compromise was reached whereupon the public ceremony at the Opera House included music while the more private, intra-communal ceremony, held at Bondi's Hakoah Club,[57] was a more sombre affair at which no music was played. What is

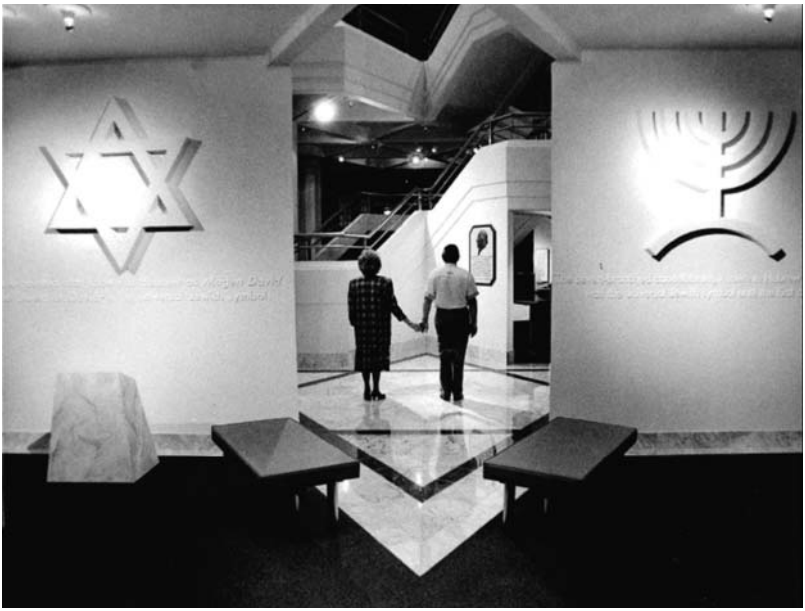

Figure 4.1 Sydney Jewish Museum, Marika Weinberger and Solly Schonberger at the opening of the Sydney Jewish Museum, 1992

Figure 4.2 Sydney Jewish Museum, Star and Culture and Continuity, 2008

Figure 4.3 Sydney Jewish Museum, Star and Culture and Continuity, 2008

evident throughout the development and building of the SJM, its memorial spaces and the staging of significant events like *Australia Remembers 1945–1995* is that the survivors' need to mourn and commemorate was primary and that the given ritual form or memorial space would, where necessary, bow to those demands. Nowhere is such a progression more evident than in the SJM's Sanctum of Remembrance, a dedicated memorial space in which the 'survivor voice' speaks the loudest.

'Now I have a Graveyard'

Established one year after the museum was opened in 1992, the Sanctum has inhabited several different places and was only placed in its current location in October 2004. Positioned adjacent to the final section of the original permanent exhibition, *Long Journey to Freedom* – an exhibition outlining the migration of Holocaust survivors to Australia – the Sanctum space completes the visitor experience and is strategically located to allow the visitor space for contemplation after the confronting content of the Holocaust exhibit.

The creation and design of the Sanctum space was motivated by the SJM's survivor volunteers, in particular those active at a board level. The space would serve, in the survivors' words, to 'remember the victims and honour the survivors'. The founder of the Sanctum, Marika

Weinberger, considers the Sanctum to be the defining element rendering the SJM a memorial as well as a museum, a 'functional' graveyard.[58]

> The Sanctum was not to be a cemetery but it does serve a similar function for those who have no graves to visit. It is a place of remembrance and as such its goal is to bring peace if not closure.[59]

She notes further that it is traditional in some Jewish communities to visit a cemetery prior to Yom Kippur. Her ritual, and those of other survivors, is now to visit the Sanctum of Remembrance. The initial conception of the Sanctum was therefore as an essentially private space, dedicated to the commemorative needs of the survivor community.

In its original configuration, the survivor-driven space of the Sanctum was a source of consternation to the SJM's first curator and chair of the 1993 curatorial committee, Sylvia Rosenblum. So strongly did the survivors feel ownership of this space that neither the curatorial committee nor the SJM curators were consulted with regard to its initial design. In a letter to the first CEO of the SJM, Alan Jacobs, Rosenblum sets out a series of strongly worded (and clearly felt) objections to the amateur nature of the space which run the gamut from choice of materials, to font legibility, text layout and wording of the memorial plaques.[60] Indeed, with regard to the wording of the commemorative plaques, Rosenblum goes so far as to state that they read as if written by 'someone who not only does not understand the nature of museum text, but also does not understand the nature of Australian English of the 1990s. The writer should be encouraged to pursue funeral parlours, graveyards and cathedrals and to avoid Museums.'

Rosenblum's most detailed objection was to the use of the following quotation from Lamentations:

> Behold, and see if there is sorrow like my sorrow
>
> (Lamentations 1:2)

Rosenblum felt that the use of the quotation was 'very, very wrong' and 'diametrically opposed to the curatorial philosophy of the Museum I worked so hard to achieve'. Rosenblum argued that the quotation referenced 'Jewish stereotypes' which asserted that 'Jews somehow have a copyright on suffering'. Such an impression, she asserted, was not only in 'grossly bad taste' but was also 'grossly offensive to our Australian values and grossly maligns our Jewish community'.[61] Having tabled similar objections in a letter to Marika Weinberger two months prior, to

no effect, the sense of frustration in Rosenblum's letter is palpable, evidenced most keenly by her closing exhortation 'Where am I expected to go from here?'[62]

No doubt this incident was reflective of disagreements manifesting in management and display on many levels, but for our purposes its revelatory content lies in the sense of ownership felt by the founding group of survivors with regard to the Sanctum space and the hybrid form of Jewish and personal memory they wished to convey. To undertake a major memorial development without curatorial input is unthinkable with regard to contemporary museum practice. For the SJM's professional staff, the space needed to align with the more universal museological interpretations with which they had striven to infuse the historical displays. Clearly, in Rosenblum's assessment the design and content of the Sanctum, exemplified in the choice of the Lamentations verse, not only contradicted this perspective but did so through a parochial reading of Holocaust history that was dangerously insular and bordering on the sentimental.[63] Such concerns were clearly not of importance to the survivors instigating the project, whose idiosyncratic, and by all accounts deeply personal, perspective resulted in a memorial space created completely independently of institutional norms and practices.

Hence, beyond questions of museological interpretation and aesthetic preferences, what can be evinced in the somewhat fiery confrontations that accompanied the creation of the Sanctum is the survivors' need to connect with traditional Jewish responses to destruction, yet to also distinguish their own experiences from those past. The Lamentations quotation again proves illuminating. Placement becomes an all-important issue. Those who visited and will visit the Sanctum will read this quotation in light of the Holocaust history they have just imbibed. Hence the incorporation of the verses from Lamentations has the effect of transforming a once-unprecedented destruction in Jewish history and memory[64] into an ancient backdrop for a modern cataclysm that both echoes and eclipses it. In one fell swoop Jewish responses to destruction are both referenced and surpassed. In so doing, the survivors knowingly or not established a paradox that continues to animate the Holocaust history and memory housed at the SJM into the present – an ongoing and seemingly irreconcilable tension between the traditional and the exceptional. As the Sanctum space developed over its now two decades of existence, this tension only continued to grow and inform the non-systematic, yet deeply personal and Jewish nature of the space.

In its current form the Sanctum is largely the result of the work of Melbourne designer Bryon Cunningham, who redesigned the space as

part of a refurbishment of sections of the SJM permanent exhibition completed in October 2004. During the refurbishment, at the urging of the survivors, a dedication to those individuals who saved Jews throughout the Holocaust – commonly referred to as the 'Righteous Among the Nations' – was added. The Sanctum was moved and enlarged but the essential elements of the memorial remained intact, namely: individual commemorative plaques, an eternal flame, inscriptions and a selection of commemorative sculptures. A recording of the *kaddish* (mourner's prayer) is played continuously in the Sanctum and there are copies of the prayer available for those who wish to recite individually as well. The Lamentations quotation remains. The Sanctum will not undergo any changes in the redevelopment of the Holocaust permanent exhibition scheduled for opening in late 2016.

In 2006, the SJM commissioned Sydney designer John Cabello[65] to create a Menorah specifically for the space, which through its design and placement in the middle of the rear wall, has the effect of drawing together the disparate elements of the Sanctum as well as providing a focal point for reflection. Despite its now more prominent position and increased physical space, the Sanctum remains the domain of the survivors, epitomized in the following inscription attributed to prominent US survivor, Professor Yaffa Eliach:

> The voice of the survivor is the authentic voice of the Holocaust. It speaks for the victims, living and dead.[66]

The continued function of the Sanctum as a commemorative site for the survivor population and their descendants is epitomized in the most recent museum brochure outlining the process for obtaining a memorial plaque. The publication notes that the Sanctum stands 'in memory of the six million martyrs and heroes'. Mention is made of the Righteous Among the Nations, and the annual memorial service, held prior to *Rosh Hashanah*, is noted. A quotation from a contributor to the commemorative plaque wall encapsulates the intensely personal commemorative aspect of the space as she notes, 'I now have a place to focus, remember and reflect on my family I never knew.'[67] The particularistic emphasis of the Sanctum is therefore clearly apparent, begging the question of why was this memorial placed in the public space of a museum, rather than the 'Jewish' space of a synagogue, or even a cemetery? The answer lies in the perceived need for the Sanctum in the Sydney survivor community and its current commemorative function.

The creation of the Sanctum space is in itself an acknowledgement that Sydney survivors felt that existing traditional modes of commemoration were inadequate to contain and relay their experience. For example, the major benefactor of the Sanctum, the late Dr Bronia Hatfield, commented in her 2005 dedication speech that her family now had a 'resting place', referring to the Sanctum as her family's 'graveyard', and noting that she now had a physical space to visit and recite *kaddish*.[68] Indeed, many survivors speak of visiting the Sanctum when they come to the museum. Even those survivors who have renounced traditional forms of Jewish worship in light of their Holocaust experiences will visit the Sanctum to 'pay their respects'.[69] The Sanctum is clearly a place in which the survivors feel they can mourn and remember those who perished. As one survivor notes:

> We need the Sanctum. None of us are sophisticated enough to say 'it is enough if I think about it'. … it may not be a traditional space but in many ways it is a better space.[70]

Survivors who were questioned as to whether it was more important to visit the Sanctum on *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) rather than traditional places of worship answered resoundingly in the affirmative.[71] Yet, while the Sanctum provides some reassurance for the survivors that the Holocaust will be remembered in a manner they deem appropriate, they also acknowledge that the Sanctum space will change over time and that the rituals enacted in and near it will also undergo modification. One survivor felt that this propensity for change was a dangerous aspect of the choice to house Holocaust memory in museums and memorials, and that until the Holocaust was firmly entrenched in the refrains of daily Jewish prayer it may not yet be remembered in perpetuity. Alternately, while another survivor felt that such changes were 'natural', as succeeding generations should not remember the Holocaust in the same way, she too expressed a desire to 'keep it Jewish', maintaining that a connection to tradition would ensure ongoing commemoration.[72] The same survivor was adamant that in the fullness of time, when the survivor generation had passed, the Sanctum space would have increased meaning. Referencing the resurgence of ANZAC Day commemorations in contemporary Australian life, and the 'poppy wall' at the Australian War Memorial in particular, she maintained that once the generation of witnesses was no more, the need for new vessels of memory would ensure that the Sanctum would be increasingly utilized on both an individual and communal level.[73]

Thus, the Sanctum and the rituals associated with it provide a prime example of the 'contradictory' nature of sacred Holocaust memory in the SJM context. In this space, the survivors' strong desire to keep this memory connected to traditional Jewish commemorative strategies comes into direct confrontation with their equally firm insistence on maintaining the Holocaust's 'exceptional' status in contrast to earlier destructions in Jewish history. Sharon Kangisser-Cohen's research into Sydney survivors' attitudes toward commemoration clearly demonstrates that while some survivors feel that their experience should become part of the traditional liturgy, they are also wary of it becoming 'just another destruction' in Jewish history.[74] For example, Kangisser-Cohen notes that despite the fact that some survivors favour the inclusion of Holocaust remembrance in the Passover *seder*, they are keenly aware that in their story, as opposed to the Exodus narrative, there is no redemption – 'there are no miracles'.[75] Their desire, therefore, to see the Holocaust remembered as 'exceptional' contrasts with traditional Jewish liturgical commemorations such as the *Tisha B'Av* (9th of Av), in which distinct historical tragedies are 'collapsed' into an undifferentiated typology of destruction and redemption.[76] In the sacred, yet non-traditional space of the Sanctum, the 'exceptional' and 'traditional' meet, resulting in the creation of a sacred space in which both are contained and transformed.

How, then, does the Sanctum space continue to allow survivors to connect Holocaust memory to traditional Jewish responses to destruction but also extend beyond them? One case in point is the rituals performed as part of annual remembrance days for which the Sanctum provides a focal point. The most significant of these is the observance of *Yom HaShoah*.[77] While this day (27 Nissan) has gained widespread acceptance in the Jewish world as an appropriate day for commemoration, some commentators argue that *Tisha B'Av*, the traditional day of mourning for all catastrophes in Jewish history, would be more apt.[78] Subsequently, observance of *Yom HaShoah* remains a national rather than religious holiday, sanctioned by the State of Israel. On *Yom HaShoah,* a day-long programme of events at the SJM[79] centres on the 'Reading of the Names' ceremony in which names of Holocaust victims are read continuously, a ritual that has become a regular part of *Yom HaShoah* observances throughout the world.[80] A moving ceremony, in which dignitaries from both the Jewish and broader Sydney communities are invited to participate, it departs from traditional Jewish commemorative strategies in both content and form.

Firstly, the commemoration takes place in an ostensibly secular institution on *Yom HaShoah*, which, as already noted, is a secular remembrance day. These factors ensure that the ceremony is not invested with the same liturgical weight as *Tisha B'Av* or even the traditional *Yizkor* service that is recited as part of High Holiday services and on each of the three pilgrimage festivals – *Pesach, Shavuot* and *Sukkot*. Secondly, the Reading of the Names ceremony is resoundingly individualistic at its core. While individuals do remember and name the deceased as part of a traditional *Yizkor* service, the emphasis in the Jewish commemorative tradition is on communal remembrance. Finally, the Sydney community expressly invites non-Jews to take part in this ceremony. In 2007, the honour of the first reading was given to then New South Wales Governor, Dame Marie Bashir, a woman of Christian Lebanese origin, an indication that sacred Holocaust memory is not solely an internal concern. What these examples make clear is that in these commemorations Jewish symbols and rituals are transmitted but also extended. They provide points of connection but are set aside when deemed inadequate in remembering and relaying the 'extraordinary history' at hand.

Similarly, the co-option, extension and transformation of traditional commemorative strategies is evident in the built structures of the Sanctum, epitomized in the Menorah – the central sculptural figure in the Sanctum space. Again, the desire for and development of the Menorah was a lay-led initiative by SJM survivors. Central to their vision was the concept of death and regeneration. Directed by the survivors' wishes, designer John Cabello created a sculpture that, while drawing upon traditional Jewish symbols, also extends and subverts them. Embodied in Cabello's sculpture is the survivors' desire for both connection to and disjuncture from tradition, their ambivalence toward both continuity and change. In so doing, Cabello draws upon and references ancient archetypes and subtly adapts them in accord with the survivors' sensibilities.

For example, Cabello's sculpture modifies the ancient Jewish symbol of the Menorah and in so doing reorients Jewish history from the perspective of the Holocaust. The Menorah (seven-stemmed candelabra) has its roots in the Hebrew Bible where the Israelites are commanded to 'make a candlestick of pure gold' (Exodus 25:31). Brought through the wilderness to the Land of Israel, the Menorah is eventually placed in the Temple in Jerusalem and so became the central symbol of ancient Israelite civilization. However, the most famous ancient depiction of the Menorah is in its appearance in the Arch of Titus.[81] Here it is no longer a symbol of sovereign strength and power; rather, it depicts the

greatest calamity in Jewish history prior to the Nazi Holocaust – the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. In the arch relief the humiliation of the destruction is epitomized in the looting of the Temple. Taken as one of the spoils of war, the fate of the Menorah mirrors the dispersion of the Jewish people. With the foundation of Israel in 1948, the Menorah is re-established once more as a symbol of nationhood, embossed on the Israeli coat of arms.

Historically, therefore, the Menorah is understood as a symbol of both destruction *and* redemption, and as such it falls neatly into traditional theological paradigms. Yet for both Cabello and the survivors who influenced the design of the Menorah, the deliberate configuring of a six-, rather than seven-stemmed candelabra ruptures the traditional theological paradigm. At first reading the choice of six is easily identified with the six million. While this choice is certainly a deliberate reference, an additional element is at play. The absence of the seventh candle may also be read to underscore the idea of a void, one that immediately connects the knowledgeable visitor with the concept of the counter-memorial pioneered by German artists Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz in the late 1980s.[82] The emphasis in counter-memorials is on absence rather than presence, rupture rather than reconciliation. Understood theologically, the significance of the design lies in its refusal to submit to traditional paradigms of destruction and redemption.

This emphasis on rupture is underscored in the other key elements of the sculpture. A circle holds the Menorah together – reminiscent of an egg – a traditional symbol of life. The cycle of life is compromised, however, by the uneven positioning of the candlesticks. Their deliberate intrusion into the circle serves a reminder of the precariousness of this cycle in the post-Holocaust world. The differing heights of the candlesticks are intended to represent the individual experience of each of the victims. This emphasis on individuality is reminiscent of the impulse underlying the 'Reading of the Names' ceremony. Finally, the placement of the Menorah in a public space is also significant, as a once particularistic religious and national symbol, now located in a public setting, comes to embody diverse meanings. In employing these strategies, Cabello's Menorah transforms and reinterprets a traditionally redemptive symbol, simultaneously connecting and distinguishing the Holocaust from prior destructions in Jewish history.[83]

As evidenced in the debates surrounding its inception and its ongoing form and function, the Sanctum provides a forum in which to enact uneasy theological innovations. For the survivors, it allows for a clear distinction between *this* tragedy and other Jewish tragedies. As such,

the symbols contained within the space and the rituals performed in or near it, begin within the Jewish tradition but move beyond it, embodying Fackenheim's observation that it is indeed the demands of Jewish life that precede Jewish thought with regard to contemporary forms of Holocaust remembrance.[84] However, *beyond* the Jewish community, the question remains as to whether the survivors' insistence on the exceptional nature of their Holocaust experience must necessarily relegate the sacred memory housed in the Sanctum to a purely internal, Jewish concern. How will those who do not share the same theological worldview reinterpret these symbols and ceremonies?

Naomi Seidman, in *Faithful Renderings: Jewish Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation,* detects an elasticity to Holocaust testimony similar to that of sacred memory in the earliest translations of the Hebrew Bible. She posits that this process of translation allowed for the transmission of a once-particularistic sacred memory, thus making it intelligible to those who stood outside of the Jewish tradition. Simultaneously, however, translation also demanded transformation of the sacred memory at hand, as translation must, by definition, involve interpretation. Comparing the translation of the emerging Holocaust canon to the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek (the Septuagint), she writes:

> If Holocaust discourse has replayed some of the scenes that followed the composition of the Septuagint, it is for two reasons: because the taboo-laden atmosphere of the sacred text has encompassed Holocaust testimony as completely as it did the Bible, and because Holocaust discourse has taken the path laid out by the Bible from Jewish to non-Jewish language worlds (and halfway back again). … on the one hand, we have the theological phenomenon of a sacred text and the myth of its immediacy; on the other, the *mediation of experience* is not only inevitable, it is also inevitably shaped by conditions that may be called political in the most quotidian sense.[85]

In other words, the transmission of Holocaust memory from 'Jewish to non-Jewish language worlds' is a process in which the transformation of Holocaust memory is dependent almost entirely on the *context* into which the memory is placed. In literary forms, this transformation occurs through the mediation of translation. In museum and memorial space, Holocaust memory is translated spatially and, within the SJM, this spatial mediation finds its starting point in the figure of the survivor.

In a very general sense, therefore, the SJM does indeed reflect Rosenblum's 'survivor perspective'. However, who or what exactly Holocaust survivors at the SJM have come to represent is not unmediated, predestined or representative of some kind of generic 'survivor perspective'. Rather, as evidenced in the preceding discussion, it reflects a deep ambivalence on the part of the Sydney survivor community with regard to the sacred significance of the task at hand. A desire to keep the Holocaust memory housed at the SJM Jewish, yet a sense of the importance of sharing this memory beyond the Jewish world: an acknowledgement that Holocaust memory is now a 'global memory'[86] that resonates well beyond intra communal confines. On the one hand, the emergence of the Holocaust as a global memory provides a comfort for the SJM's survivors, as it ensures that the Holocaust will not be remembered as 'simply another destruction' – its importance beyond the Jewish world has warranted this at least. However, if Holocaust memory is to retain this global resonance, then the interpretive frameworks of those *outside* of the Jewish community will also have a hand in determining its sacred meaning. As such, while within the Sydney Jewish community Holocaust memory and the experience of Holocaust survivors may be retained as primarily Jewish, the nature of this memory will continue to emerge and change

Figure 4.4 Sydney Jewish Museum, Commemorative Plaques

as the needs of the largely non-Jewish public that visit the museum imbue its symbolic structures with sacred meanings that its founders never would, nor could, have imagined. Such a transformation of sacred memory is not without precedent, however. A similar process can be detected in the ancient and enduring theodicy of 'redemptive suffering'.

Figure 4.5 Sydney Jewish Museum, The Eternal Flame

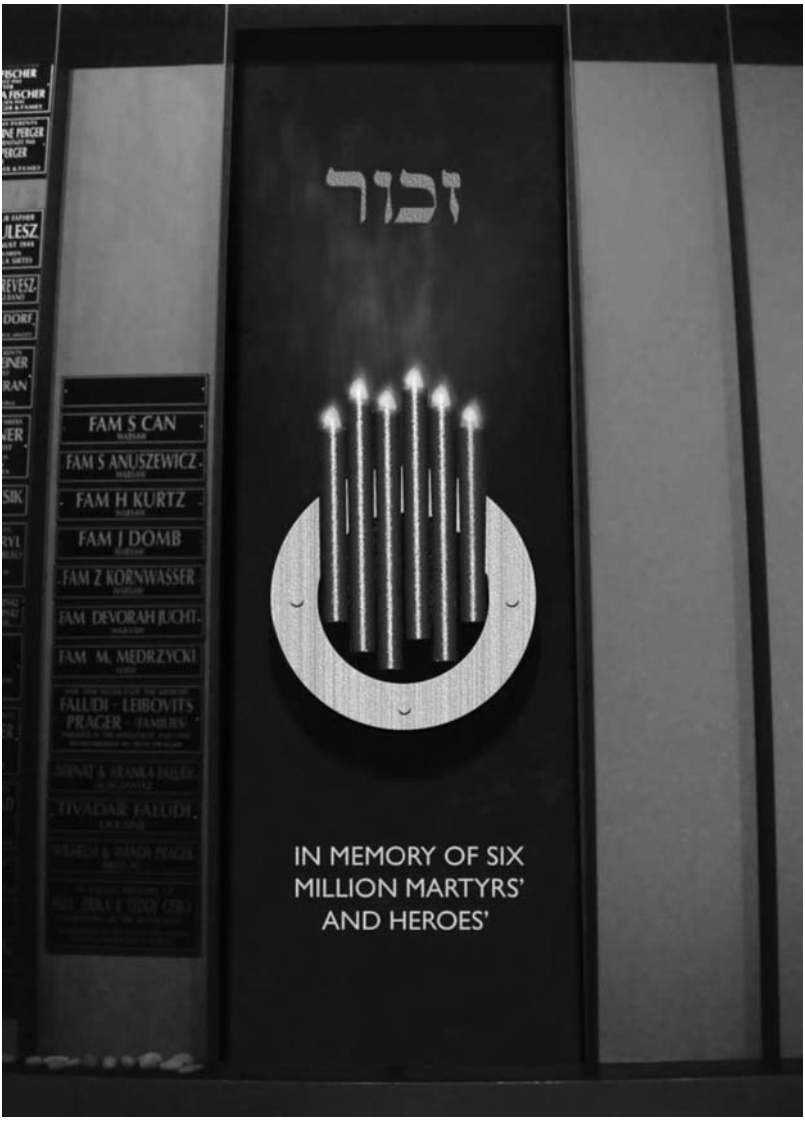

Figure 4.6 John Cabello's Menorah

The Redemptive Sufferer: The *Akedah*, the Ten Martyrs and the Cross

The theodicy of the redemptive sufferer, where the suffering of an innocent atones for the sins of the collective, is an idea more commonly associated with Christianity than Judaism. Yet the roots of the Christ's passion reach back further than the second temple Judaism in which nascent Christianity was spawned. They extend into the ritualized child sacrifice that marked the cultic practices of ancient near eastern civilizations. The notion of child sacrifice is an anathema to the modern mind, and it was thought that the great Hebrew prophets of the late seventh and sixth centuries effectively removed this practice from ancient Israelite culture. Recent scholarship has challenged that assertion, arguing that while 'the *practice* was at some point eradicated, the *religious idea* associated with one particular form of it – the donation of the first-born son – remained potent and productive'.[87] While the ritual practice itself was eliminated, the theodicy of redemptive suffering was retained in a sublimated form.

The exemplar of such practices in the Hebrew Bible is found in Genesis 22:1–19, known as the Binding of Isaac or, in Hebrew, the *Akedah*. The interpretations surrounding this passage are so numerous and influential that one hesitates to speak of an 'original meaning' of the text, but the passage does serve as an indication that the idea of the redemptive sufferer or redemptive sacrifice continues to influence ancient Israelite culture. Abraham was rewarded for his willingness to carry out God's gruesome command – the death of his self-confessed beloved son. Lauded as a paragon of obedience in the Jewish tradition and as the archetypical 'man of faith' in Christianity,[88] Abraham's act becomes the foundational event par excellence, one invoked by succeeding generations in the hope of 'staying the angel's hand' and/or imbuing the experience of martyrdom with meaning.

Numerous sublimated narrative examples of the atoning sacrifice of the first-born son are evidenced throughout the Hebrew Bible and indeed into the New Testament.[89] The motif also finds its way into rabbinic writing, particularly in the stories surrounding the 'Ten Martyrs', those sages executed during the Roman persecutions in first- and second-century Palestine. In these texts, the typology of vicarious atonement, 'so strikingly close to that in Christianity',[90] acts not only to invoke the foundational acts of old but to then establish a new, even more radical foundational act, as no angel appears to 'stay thy hand,' the angels themselves being silenced by God.

> The host of angels spoke before the Holy One, blessed be He, 'A righteous man like this, to whom Thou hast revealed all the mysteries of the upper world and the secrets of the lower one – shall this man be murdered cruelly by so wicked a man? *This* is Torah? *This* is its reward? The Holy One, blessed be He, answered, 'Let him to his fate. The merits of his deeds shall stand for the generations following him.'[91]

Intercession found wanting, the martyrdom of the sages is reinterpreted as a sublime sacrificial paradigm. While the anguish conveyed in this extended parable is palpable, the redemptive meaning attributed to the sages' deaths does not allow distress to dissolve into despair. Rather, their martyrdom is imbued by the rabbinic tradition with the mythic meaning of Abraham's foundational act while simultaneously recast to provide yet another vicarious redemption for the generations to come. It is no coincidence that this parable forms part of the liturgy in the traditional *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) morning service.

Arguably, the *Akedah* as a metahistorical archetype finds it greatest resonance in the medieval Jewish communities of *Ashkenaz*,[92] and their mass martyrdom in the wake of the Crusades. The following excerpts from *The Crusade Chronicle of Solomon Bar Simson* illustrate the invocation of the Abraham's (near) sacrifice in light of the destruction experienced by *Ashkenazic* Jewry. The narrator begins his chronicle in a mode similar to more modern, critical historical accounts, but ends in the mythical, his pleas for intervention grounded in the foundational biblical theodicies.

> Lord God are you wiping out the remnant of Israel? Where are your awesome wonders about which our ancestors told us, saying, 'Truly, the Lord brought you up from Egypt and Babylonia?'… do not distance yourself from us, for tragedy is near and there is none to aid us. Who has heard or seen such a thing?
>
> Ask and see: Were there ever so many sacrifices like these since the days of Adam? Were there ever a thousand one hundred sacrifices on one day, all of them like the sacrifice of Isaac the son of Abraham? For one the world shook, when he was offered up on Mount Moriah, as is said: 'Hark! The angels cried aloud!?' The heavens darkened. What has been done [this time]? 'Why did the heavens not darken? Why did the stars not withdraw their brightness?'
>
> 'At such things will you restrain yourself, O' Lord?' 'For your sake they were killed' – innumerable souls. 'Avenge the blood of your

servants that has been spilled in our days and before our eyes speedily. Amen.[93]

Scholars have tended to interpret the mass martyrdom of *Ashkenazic* Jewry during the Crusades as an aberrant episode in Jewish history, as, strictly speaking, 'the commandment during the time of forced religious conversion includes readiness to be killed', but does not extend to a pre-emptive killing of oneself or one's family as was often the case during the Crusades.[94] Yet it is also possible to understand these texts and the acts they describe as embodying the voice and actions of the most faithful – those who seek to rouse God to *act*, and who offer their own martyrdom in precisely the same mode of obedience for which their ancestor Abraham was so abundantly rewarded. Rather than a crisis of faith, recast in a metahistorical framework, the chronicler's cry may be better understood as faith's acclamation.

David Roskies' discussion of Isaac Bar Shalom's poem 'There is None Like You Among the Dumb' is a case in point. The poem's title and theme are based on a play on the Hebrew words *illemim* (dumb/mute) and *elim* (gods) contained in Psalm 86:8, establishing parody, as Roskies identifies, as the central stylistic device of the work.[95] However, it is also possible to read this poem as a dynamic theodicy reminiscent of the biblical Psalmist, an invocation to the God of History to intervene as in 'days of old'. Roskies charts the poem's mythical motifs back through earlier rabbinic writings and notes that Bar Shalom is successful in inserting sections of the poem into the daily liturgy 'between the proclamation, "There is no God beside You" and the affirmation "You have been the help of our fathers from old"'.[96] In so doing he illustrates how the metahistorical element is retained in Jewish texts and ritual. However, despite Roskies' prescient understanding of traditional Jewish response to destruction as largely archetypical and cyclical in nature, he fails to isolate the nature of the theodicy within this typology, thus emphasizing parody to the exclusion of pathos.

In all these examples, it is the death of the beloved and innocent individual/community (or the *willingness* to undergo death in the case of the biblical *Akedah*) that allows for continued life. This is not a comfortable theology from a modern perspective, but it is one that arguably provides the central axis upon which the traditional theologies of both Judaism and Christianity turn. As such, it is little wonder that the idea finds most currency as an explicit framework for response to the Holocaust in the *haredi* (Jewish ultra-Orthodox) world.[97] As close to the Holocaust as 1946, Simhah Elberg, a Warsaw survivor from

a traditional *hassidic* background, employed the mythic archetype in his work, 'The *Akedah* of Treblinka'.

> The *Akedah* of Isaac and the *Akedah* of Treblinka, the first for an individual and the second for a people. Both sanctified our history, our existence. Treblinka is the culmination of Mount Moriah. The *Akedah* of the Isaac nation has survived the test … Isaac was led to the *Akedah* solely by God's order. God's will was effectual in this way at the *Akedah* of Treblinka.[98]

For Elberg, the death camps of Europe were yet another manifestation of Mount Moriah, a national *Akedah*. At first reading the idea appears abhorrent, the very connection of God's will and the death camps of Europe seeming to negate any notion of a benevolent God. However, from a traditional perspective – a perspective informed by the symbiotic relationship between the historical and metahistorical – the idea acts to connect the current experience of suffering with its biblical archetype and thus affirm God's will in the present. The covenant remains intact.

Interestingly, at the opposite end of the denominational spectrum, the Reform Rabbi and theologian Ignaz Maybaum invokes a similar theodicy to Elberg but further progresses the *Akedah* archetype to its most radical manifestation – that of the Crucifixion. Beginning within the Jewish tradition, he contrasts the *Akedah* with the Cross, understanding the former as not requiring total sacrifice, whilst the latter demands it as a fundamental theological tenet. Thus, in Maybaum's theology the Holocaust is understood as a crisis for Christianity rather than for Judaism. European Jewry fulfils the role of Jesus for the Christian world, atoning again for the sins of the humanity.

> The *Akedah* has the message: progress is possible without sacrifice. The *hurban*, on the other hand, is the progress achieved in a history in which the gentiles are the chief actors, or better, perpetrators. The *hurban* is progress achieved through sacrifice.
>
> Jews suffered vicarious death for the sins of mankind … the Jew hatred which Hitler inherited from the medieval church made Auschwitz the twentieth century Calvary of the Jewish people.[99]

The appropriation of the Cross as a metaphor for Jewish suffering in the twentieth century is not isolated to Maybaum. David Roskies devotes an entire chapter of his seminal work *Against the Apocalypse* to this theme,

beginning with 'the emergence of the Holocaust survivor as Christ figure'.[100] He grounds his discussion in the description given to Wiesel's famous depiction of the angelic boy hanged between two other camp inmates – in which Francois Mauriac, the Catholic writer of the foreword to the English edition of Wiesel's *Night* – sees Calvary.

> And I who believe that God is love, what answer could I give my young questioner, whose dark eyes still held the reflection of that angelic sadness which had appeared one day upon the face of the hanged child? What did I say to him? Did I speak of that other Israeli, his brother, who may have resembled him – the Crucified, whose Cross has conquered the world? Did I affirm that the stumbling block to his faith was the cornerstone of mine, and that the conformity between the Cross and the suffering of men was in my eyes the key to that impenetrable mystery whereon the faith of his childhood had perished?[101]

The transfiguration from *Akedah* to Crucifixion changes the nature of the theodicy of redemptive suffering significantly. For no longer does the redemptive sufferer operate within *Jewish* history, in which martyrdom is given meaning within the divine purpose and mission of the People Israel. Rather, it is the sacrificial role that the Jewish people play in *Christian* conceptions of metahistory that is at stake. The Jew no longer suffers within Jewish history but without. As Roskies surmises:

> To the Christian who had found his way back to a statement of faith, the Jewish survivor was the perfect symbol of continuity, but for a Jewish sufferer to stand alone as the purveyor of a new gospel was a truly radical departure from the Jewish perspective.[102]

In a similar progression, the figure of the Holocaust survivor and victim has undergone radical transformation in the post-war period as the Holocaust entered into public consciousness. Alvin Rosenfeld charts this development in perhaps the most famous Holocaust victim, the child diarist, Anne Frank. Rosenfeld traces the transformation of both the diary and play across five decades and finds in each instance a 'different Anne' emerging. In the conservative and assimilationist political atmosphere of the 1950s, Anne is the personification of hope and optimism, the Jewishness which was the root cause of her persecution in the first place jettisoned for a universal reading in which Anne becomes

'a vivacious and lovable girl next door – a figure who suited the general spirit of postwar prosperity and conformed to a political mood that was generally "feel good" and conservative'.[103] This repackaging of Anne's story is encapsulated in the concluding lines of the Goodrich and Hackett stage play, lines for which the diary is perhaps best known, in which the universalistic and hopeful Anne affirms, 'In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.'[104]

As the more 'Jewish' elements of the diary came to light in subsequent publications, a very different Holocaust victim emerges. In a 'definitive'[105] edition published by the Netherlands State Institute for War Documentation in 1986, an Anne emerges who not only reckons with her Jewishness but attributes to it meaning far beyond her immediate circumstances.[106] She writes of her incarceration and the predicament of European Jewry in general:

> God has never deserted our people. Right through the ages there have been Jews, through all the ages they have had to suffer, but it made them strong too; the weak fall, but the strong will remain and never go under.[107]

The Anne of the definitive edition does not eradicate her Jewishness in favour of the universalist rendering found in the 1950s play in which the figure of Anne ponders (without source in the diary itself) that 'We're not the only people that've had to suffer. There've always been people that've had to ... sometimes one race ... sometimes another.' Rosenfeld objects to this interjection on the grounds that it generalizes Anne 'to the point of deracinating her'.[108] Yet what Rosenfeld fails to isolate in the definitive edition is the young diarist's uncanny ability to retain the tension between a particular and universal interpretation of her predicament. As she writes in the pages immediately preceding the quotation above:

> If we bear this suffering, and if there are still Jews left, when it is over, then Jews, instead of being doomed, will be held up as an example. Who knows, it might even be our religion from which the world and all peoples learn good, and for that reason and for that alone do we have to suffer now. We can never become just Netherlanders, or just English, or representatives of any country for that matter, we will always remain Jews, but we want to, too …[109]

The Anne of the definitive edition is able to explain her predicament in both Jewish and universal terms; she does not fall into the dichotomy

that her later interpreters place upon her in order to assimilate the diary into a prevailing political mood or religious ethos. Despite missing this vital (and extraordinary) capacity in the young writer, what Rosenfeld's work uncovers is the remarkable fluidity of the narrative frame within which the Holocaust victim exists. The Anne Frank of the 1950s is not the Anne Frank of the 1980s, much less the 'original Anne'. The victim comes to be known through the interpretive frames in which her story is received.

Likewise, Naomi Seidman's analysis of the development and reception of Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night* attributes the dominant view of the 'who the Holocaust survivor is' as almost entirely contingent upon the environment in which the story will be told. In Wiesel's writings Seidman finds 'two survivors'; the first the enraged Yiddish writer of *Un die Velt hot Geshvign* (*And the World Remained Silent*), the second the existentialist and silent French writer of *La Nuit* (*Night*) – the latter, of course, being the version of the memoir that launched Wiesel's career as a writer. Again, the reliability of the two accounts is not the issue at stake. Rather, the interest lies in the adaptation that the survivor's story must undergo when faced with the question of reception. Who will hear the story and what can they bear to hear? Further, what is the political and social context that the story will enter and within this environment will the survivor's story be shunned or embraced? The following, extended quotation from Seidman makes the implications of such concerns clear:

> By the time Wiesel was negotiating with his French publishers, the survivor who pointed an accusatory finger at [Ilsa Koch], then raising her children in the new postwar Germany, had been supplanted by the survivor haunted by metaphysics and silence. It is this second version of how *Night* came to be written that has attained mythical status, most directly because it appears in Mauriac's foreword to the work (included in each new edition and translation) but also because of Wiesel's own accounts of the interview. And the myriad works of commentary on Wiesel have seized upon this theme, producing endless volumes on the existential and theological silences of his work, on the question of what has been called 'the limits of representation'. What remains outside this proliferating discourse on the unsayable is not what cannot be spoken but what *cannot be spoken in French*. And this is not the 'silence of the dead' but rather the scandal of the living, the scandal of Jewish rage and unwillingness to embody suffering and victimization. The image that dominates the end of *Night* – the look, as Mauriac describes it, 'as of a Lazarus risen from

> the dead, yet still a prisoner within the grim confines where he had strayed, stumbling among shameful corpses' – is precisely the image that Wiesel shatters at the end of his Yiddish work. And resurrects to end the French one.[110]

The Yiddish survivor is filled with rage, he smashes the mirror in which his emaciated face appears while the French survivor is left to stare at the mirror in silence, the ghostly reflection indelibly imprinted into the memory of the young Eliezer. It is this second survivor that was received into public consciousness for, as David Roskies notes, 'since no one in the literary establishment of the 1950s was ready to be preached to by a Holocaust survivor, existentialist doubt became the better part of valour'.[111]

How, then, does the representation of the Holocaust victim and survivor in the memorial museum space of the SJM reflect and transform the sacred paradigms of redemptive suffering? Similarly to her more famous international counterparts, the figure of the survivor in the Australian context has also undergone significant modification and change in accordance with shifts in the broader public culture. One example is the transformation of the survivor community from a largely unwanted migrant group in the immediate post-war period – a period in which, despite Australia's expanded immigration policy under the new Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell, quotas on Jewish migration persisted[112] – to a community at pains to celebrate its connection to and comfort with 'the Australian way of life'. This shift in understanding as to who and what the Holocaust survivor was in the Australian context came into sharp relief in the planning for a dedicated section of the SJM's permanent exhibition on the migration of survivors to Australia. Exactly how much information regarding post-war restrictions on Jewish migration should be displayed was hotly debated, with survivors reticent to display anything but gratitude toward a country that they perceived to have given them a chance at a new life. The completed display, *Long Journey to Freedom*, narrowly escaped the subtitle 'Thank you Australia', but only at the insistence of the exhibitions' historical consultants who felt that to retroactively ascribe such benevolence to a largely discriminatory migration policy would constitute a clear breach of historical accuracy.[113]

Despite official discrimination there is evidence that survivors felt a certain amount of comfort in their newly adopted home. In a variety of written and videotaped testimony, survivors speak of the political and religious freedom they experienced in their adopted country and of the generally warm welcome they received from the (then), for the

most part, Anglo-Australian community at large.[114] Yet recent research points to the fact that such retrospective testimony must be qualified. As Ruth Wajnryb notes, Australia's reception of Holocaust survivors, following the pattern of most Allied countries in the post-war period, was not characterized by receptivity to hearing their wartime experiences; not even, as she points out, in professional circles such as the field of psychology where one would expect such openness to be forthcoming.[115] Many Australian survivors, no doubt, did and do feel enormous gratitude toward a country in which they were able to rebuild themselves, their families and communities, but in the immediate post-war period this reconstruction was achieved not through talking about their wartime experiences but rather by relegating these traumatic memories to the past and focusing on the present and future.[116]

Thus, as noted at the outset of this chapter, it is only with the shift in government policy toward a multicultural Australia in the 1970s that the particularity of the Jewish experience in Europe emerged into public consciousness in Australia. This shift in public discourse allowed the figure of the Holocaust survivor in the Australian context to come to the fore. In this progression, Rosenblum's 'private, personal and Jewish' survivor underwent modification in order to find receptivity in the broader Australian public sphere. While the 'exceptional' nature of the survivor experience was maintained, its universal relevance now needed to extend to a largely non-Jewish public who would form the SJM's main visitor base. Such issues were not isolated to the SJM – as explicated in earlier in this study, at much the same time the founders of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) were also struggling with this issue in the far more overtly political landscape of Washington, DC.[117] However, unlike the USHMM, the reticence of the SJM's survivors to embody universal suffering – a progression in which they felt their particular experience could possibly be diminished and/or relativized,[118] – meant that the universalistic aspects of the SJM exhibition are largely only evident through inference or in the exhibitions' associated public and education programmes.[119] As such, while the closing section of the original permanent exhibition explores the universal relevance of the Holocaust, followed immediately by a focus on the Righteous, the closing displays of *Long Journey to Freedom* and the Sanctum of Remembrance bring the exhibition to a resoundingly particularistic end.

Even so, a deliberately particularistic memory must undergo transformation when placed in public space. Witness a vignette relayed by a survivor concerning the telling of her personal story to a class at a

Catholic girl's school. At the conclusion of the survivor's presentation, a Catholic sister and teacher at the school, overwhelmed by the impact of the narrative, asked whether she could come and pray in the Sanctum the next day. Upon further discussion she hesitantly asked the survivor, 'Can I kneel?' to which the survivor, touched by the genuine emotion contained in the request replied, 'Sister, you can lie down if you like'.[120] Kneeling in the Jewish tradition is only performed before God. On the holiest days in the Jewish liturgical calendar, Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, the supplicant prostrates himself in front of the Ark containing the Scrolls of the Torah. Similarly, in the Christian tradition, one kneels before God, but the conduit to God is no longer the scrolls of the Law but the figure of the suffering Christ, whose sacrifice allowed for the redemption of all mankind.

Another example exhibits a similar sacred ambiguity. In December 2009, a private plaque dedication ceremony was held in the Sanctum to honour a deceased survivor and his spouse, who had been formally recognised by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Among the Nations.[121] The ceremony was attended by the deceased couple's son, his wife and child. While the son had some sense of Jewish identity the rest of his family were not Jewish and maintained no connection to the Jewish community beyond an affiliation with the museum. During the course of what was, by all accounts, a very moving ceremony, the couple were helped by museum staff members to recite the mourner's *kaddish* in English, without the requisite *minyan*, standing before the plaque and Cabello's menorah. After reciting the prayer, the man knelt in front of the plaque, rose to kiss it and then placed a memorial stone on the ledge, inquiring as to the tradition behind the practice when doing so. The staff members attending the occasion remarked on the family's gratitude for a 'sacred space' in which to remember and honour their family.[122] The syncretic nature of the space coupled with the divergent traditions of the individual visitors meant that while Jewish traditions invoked they were also extended, the sacred meaning of the space ultimately dictated by the pre-existing interpretive frames of the visitor.

While impossible to answer fully, one must ask, exactly before whom or what did the son kneel? Similarly, when prostrate in the Sanctum before who did the nun bow and what was her conduit, her method of supplication? Surrounded by plaques inscribed with the names of victims and survivors who have since passed away, framed by an eternal flame and Cabello's decidedly untraditional Menorah, the space is the built expression of the survivors' desire to create an 'exceptional yet Jewish' sacred memory and can be understood as that memory's spatial

reconstruction. In the Sanctum the Jewish survivor can commemorate and mourn the Jewish dead but so too can the memory of Jewish martyrdom serve as a conduit for Christian atonement. The survivors' insistence on the exceptional nature of their experience is affirmed through the use of non-traditional space (exemplified in the preceding discussion of the design and building of the Sanctum of Remembrance), yet it is the demands of this very space that will ultimately force the universality of their experience to the forefront. As such, the figure of the Jewish survivor at the SJM begins within the Jewish tradition but ends without. The particular and the universal are held in tension, only to crystallize within the pre-existing interpretive frame of each visitor. The liminal nature of public sacred space, a space positioned *between* traditions, so to speak, allows for a plurality of sacred rituals to be enacted. In so doing, both traditions are transformed as the ancient sacred archetype is evoked and seamlessly fused in the confrontation with contemporary trauma – trauma embodied and relayed through the figure and experience of the Holocaust survivor – victim and witness, the redemptive sufferer par excellence.

Australian Holocaust Memory: Particular and Universal?

It is precisely the metahistorical and 'elastic' nature of Holocaust memory as constructed through the redemptive figure of the survivor that contributes to the emergence of the Holocaust as a powerful 'bridging metaphor' in Australian political discourse. Indeed, Neil Levi argues that the explicit use of Holocaust memory as a comparative tool in Australian public discourse is so pervasive that,

> … the Australian case poses a problem for the widespread critique of transnational Holocaust remembrance as a form of what is known as 'screen memory': the claim that the Holocaust is remembered in order to displace, repress or 'screen' other, perhaps more traumatic, local events or histories.[123]

Levi cites numerous examples of such explicit comparisons in both public discourse and 'built references' in major Australian cultural institutions such as the National Museum of Australia. In Australian public life the Holocaust *has* been used to 'tell other stories', its moral weight buttressing both liberal commentators who would liken aspects of the Australian experience to that of Nazi Germany and more conservative voices who would use it to disavow – 'whatever we have been, we were never that'.[124]

In a cultural landscape in which museums and memorials are increasingly understood as reflections of and contributors to issues of national import, it is little wonder that the particularistic emphasis of the SJM's founders is constantly being reassessed in order to achieve to its self-proclaimed mission of 'contemporary relevance'.[125] The question arises, therefore, does the original particularistic focus of the SJM's founders sit in opposition to the institution's current mission 'to inspire mutual respect and cross-cultural understanding in our society', or can this emphasis be retained but recast to allow the universal resonance of Holocaust memory to be felt beyond the confines of the Sydney Jewish community?[126]

As this study and many others have demonstrated, this challenge is not unique to the Australian experience and it is well documented that the 'shape' of most major Holocaust museums and memorials is deeply influenced by either nationalistic or humanistic imperatives.[127] Judith Berman notes that the universalization of Holocaust memory may take several different forms: it may be 'nationalized' and made relevant to other historical experiences of the nation in which it is placed; its 'moral, political and social implications' may be focused upon to highlight contemporary political causes and concerns; or the more 'humanistic' aspects of Holocaust memory can be invoked, where a 'consideration of the universal humanistic lessons of the Holocaust' is undertaken 'to fight against prejudice, discrimination and racism'.[128] While Berman's distinctions are useful, her overall conclusion that the 'universalization of the Holocaust … inevitably turns attention away from the destruction of European Jewry' is open to question.[129] If a shallow universalism may lead to a 'blurring of distinctions', a collapsing of distinct experiences of persecution into more generalized categories of loss, emphasizing the *universality* of a particular experience only amplifies its resonance. Its invocation can serve to illuminate a variety of historical instances, political and social causes and moral and ethical dilemmas *without* betraying its particular identity. In such a definition, the application of Holocaust memory to highlight other instances of genocide and mass trauma serves only to augment, not to diminish Holocaust memory, to extend empathy and identification with victims of persecution rather than detract and obscure.

Literary critic Ruth Wisse makes a similar distinction between universalism and universality when reflecting upon the universal appeal of modern Jewish literature:

> Some critics have mistaken the broad appeal of Jewish writing for proof that it belongs to no particular people, but this is to confuse

> universalism, which seeks to eliminate tribal categories, with universality, which is the global resonance of a tribal work. The Hebrew Bible is a tribal document that became one of the world's most influential works of literature.[130]

Wisse's astute observation also has application to current uses of Holocaust memory, wherein the Holocaust is understood both as a specific historical event – the genocide perpetrated against European Jewry and a universal symbol – an emblem of 'radical evil'. This propensity for universality within Holocaust memory is explored from a sociological perspective in the work of Jeffrey C. Alexander. In a seminal article emphasizing the sociological factors at play in the universalization of Holocaust memory, Alexander argues that the Holocaust, 'a specific and situated historical event', has become,

> … transformed into a generalized symbol of human suffering and moral evil, a universalized symbol whose very existence has created historically unprecedented opportunities for ethnic, racial and religious justice, for mutual recognition, and for global conflicts to become regulated in a more civil way.[131]

Alexander makes the point that at the time of the liberation of Europe's concentration camps, the genocide of European Jewry was subsumed within the broader picture of Nazi atrocities. Through a multitude of examples from film to literature, survivor testimony and the development of international law, Alexander charts how, in the sixty years since the liberation of Europe's concentration camps, the Holocaust was 'particularized' and then paradoxically 'universalized' through its elevation as an archetypical example of 'sacred evil'.[132] Alexander's constructivist view does not seek to recreate the events of the Holocaust in order to provide a different interpretation of the historical unfolding of these events. Rather, he seeks to identify *how* we have come to receive and 'know' the Holocaust through tracking the cultural codes that have encrypted this memory into popular consciousness.[133]

For example, Alexander ponders as to how we may have come to conceptualize the Holocaust differently had all the camps been liberated by the Soviets, rather than just those in the East. Would the Soviet 'fight against fascism' have prevailed as the dominant interpretive frame through which the Holocaust came to be known? If so, would not the 'Jewishness' of the victims have been subsumed under the undifferentiated rubric of 'victims of fascism', the ubiquitous appellation

within which the Soviets remembered all victims of Nazism? Rather, Alexander argues, as it was predominantly through the lens of the western Allies' victory, through 'the perspective of the triumphant, forward looking, militantly and militarily democratic new world warrior'[134] that Nazi crimes were exposed, it is through these particular 'cultural codes' that the mass killing of Europe's Jews come to be conceptualized as the 'Holocaust'. Indeed, Alexander notes that 'the contingency of this knowledge is so powerful that it might well be said that, if the Allies had not won the war, the 'Holocaust' would never have been discovered.'[135]

The power of the Allied interpretive framework also extended into the post-war period. Alexander notes that in this period Nazi antisemitism became synonymous with the 'radical evil' that the Allies had gone to war to eradicate – despite the well-documented fact that ending the genocide of Europe's Jews was never given primacy in Allied war efforts. However, once established as a motivating cause after the fact, the fight against Nazism could be conceptualized as synonymous with the fight against antisemitism in post-war America. In this setting, the Holocaust provided a retrospective reason as to why America fought the war and this reason could then be deployed to reinforce contemporary notions of why antisemitism had to be eradicated from American society. Thus, the Holocaust was conceptualized in the post-war period as a justification for both America's past policies and its current concerns.[136]

In the course of his analysis, Alexander develops a prescient understanding of the (paradoxically) non-referential, yet simultaneously universal quality of this 'sacred evil':

> The Jewish mass killings became what we might identify, in Durkheimian terms, as a sacred-evil, an evil that recalled a trauma of such enormity and horror that it had to be radically set apart from the world and all of its other traumatizing events, and which became inexplicable in ordinary, rational terms. As part of the Nazi scheme of world domination, the Jewish mass killing was heinous but at least it was understandable. As a sacred evil, set apart from ordinary evil things, it has become mysterious and inexplicable.[137]

Alexander thus provides a sociological framework for understanding how 'the Jewish killings'[138] have come to be understood as an ever-present reference point in diverse communal and national settings. While Alexander ultimately deems what might be labelled 'sacred' about the 'sacred evil' of the Holocaust as 'inexplicable' – a conclusion

antithetical to the current study's attempt to uncover and articulate the *variety* of scared meanings attributed to Holocaust memory in the present – his work does provide a useful template with which to examine how Holocaust memory might act as a *sacredly set apart* memory that is at once 'unique and not unique' or, in the parlance of this work, both particular and universal. In tracing how Holocaust memory has become a moral touchstone for a diverse array of political and social causes, Alexander demonstrates how the Holocaust emerged 65 years after the liberation of Europe's concentration camps as a powerful 'bridging metaphor',[139] a memory that both retains and points beyond its particular historical circumstance. In using such terminology, Alexander is pointing to the power of Holocaust memory as a 'universal' symbol rather than a historical 'litmus test' for mass suffering.[140] Unlike other commentators concerned with 'Holocaust uniqueness', Alexander's aim is not to distinguish where and how the Holocaust may be like or unlike other genocides in a historical sense, but rather to demonstrate how the deployment of Holocaust memory, through 'symbolic extension', has been mobilized to lend legitimacy and channel resources to other instances of genocide and mass trauma.[141] In such instances the universal aspects of Holocaust memory are emphasized and 'the horrific trauma of the Jews (becomes) the trauma of all humankind'.[142]

While theoretically rich and useful, there are serious flaws in Alexander's characterization of the generative power of Holocaust memory. Robert Manne powerfully articulates such critiques in a series of essays compiled as a response to Alexander's original article on the tenth anniversary of its publication. Manne points out that the uniqueness debate itself has been, on average, far more divisive than unifying, referencing arguments concerning the framing of this memory at the USHMM as a case in point.[143] Yet despite these valid objections, Manne does admit that the transformative element of Alexander's characterization of Holocaust memory must be reckoned with for a full accounting of the power of this memory to be made. Evoking Peter Novick's well-known account of the instrumentalization of Holocaust memory in the North American context as the polar opposite of Alexander's sociologically centred critique, Manne astutely observes that what is truly necessary to fully account for the 'unique and not unique' malleability of this memory is a merging of 'Novick's sceptical and sardonic Weberian reading with Alexander's more generous and imaginative Durkheimian one'.[144]

Such nuanced readings are beginning to emerge. The generative as well as political power of Holocaust memory is evinced in the

evocation of this memory in the developing world. In this context the universal resonance of Holocaust memory provides a backdrop for particular causes and concerns. For example, at the United Nations Conference against Racism held in 2001 in Durban, South Africa, the moral authority of Holocaust memory was harnessed in the name of reparations, and utilized to create support for marginalized groups otherwise ignored in the West.[145] This propensity is also apparent in critiques of colonial genocide, where Holocaust memory is generally employed to illustrate the radical nature of genocides perpetrated as part of the European colonial project.[146] Yet, as Vinay Lal and others argue, resistance within academic discourse to acknowledging the magnitude of colonial genocides has also had the perverse effect of utilizing Holocaust memory to minimize, rather than illuminate the nature and scope of previous genocides.[147] While many of these critiques are openly polemical in their approach, their central point – that Holocaust memory can be used as 'screen memory' with regard to colonial genocides – is well taken.[148] What is evident from even this brief examination of the universality of Holocaust memory is that its potential for 'symbolic extension' can be used to include or exclude, to highlight injustice or to screen it from view.[149]

Taking up this challenge in his work on the relationship between Holocaust memory and decolonization, Michael Rothberg argues for a re-envisioning of Holocaust memory in terms of 'multidirectional memory'.[150] Rothberg maintains that as much as one traumatic memory can serve to 'screen' another, so too does this very same memory contain the ability to throw previously 'silenced' traumatic memories into sharp relief. Moving beyond a model of public memory in which there can only be 'winners and losers', he advocates for an understanding of public memory in which 'we consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative'.[151] Given the language of 'uniqueness' within which Holocaust memory has been couched for a significant portion of its history, a shift toward multidirectional models of Holocaust memory requires a rethinking of the majority of memory work undertaken to date. In this regard, a 'particular/universal' model, such as that found at the SJM, could provide an alternate pathway to viewing this ongoing dilemma.

Retaining a particular, yet universal approach to Holocaust memory is no easy task and it is little wonder that this debate has fuelled many of the significant debates at the SJM, specifically with regard to the institution's mission and vision. The SJM's first mission statement provides a

clear example of the particularistic perspective evident in the early years of the museum's functioning:

> The Sydney Jewish Museum is a museum about a people. Created as a living memorial to the *Shoah*, it honors the six million who perished, the courage and the suffering of all those who were caught up and those who attempted to resist evil for the sake of what was right. We celebrate their lives, cherish the civilization that they built, their achievements and faith, their joys and hopes, together with the story of the Australian Jewish community and its culture.[152]

Followed by a list of 'Aims and Objectives' the focus of the mission statement is overwhelmingly particularistic, although an implicit understanding of 'universal values' might be drawn from statements such as the resistance of 'evil for the sake of what was right', and the paying 'tribute to the individual rights and liberties we enjoy in democratic Australia'. The Aims and Objectives end with a sentence emphasizing the 'importance of religious and cultural tolerance so that these events will never be repeated'. Upon whom they might be repeated is left unspecified.

In contrast, the current version of the SJM mission statement begins in the universal, outlining the institution's vision thus:

> To inspire mutual respect and cross-cultural understanding within our society, with particular emphasis on the lessons of the Holocaust, in order that such a tragedy can never again happen to any people.[153]

The mission statement continues from this premise to mention specifically 'the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators, honour the survivors and pay tribute to the Righteous Among the Nations' and contextualizes the Holocaust as a 'crime against humanity with contemporary and universal significance'.[154] A clear shift has occurred in which the particular memory of the Jewish survivor moves from being the *object* of the mission to its *conduit*, its channel to the larger concerns that emanate from a consideration of the Holocaust. One can speculate as to the causes of this shift – the aging of the survivor population and the decrease in their direct influence is certainly one factor,[155] but so too is the demand that the contemporary museum retain its 'relevance' beyond its founding constituency in order to ensure ongoing significance to its predominantly non-Jewish visitor base.

Similar changes have emerged in the built space of the SJM. The addition in 2005 to the permanent exhibition of *Serniki: Unearthing the Holocaust*, a display that focuses upon the war crimes trials undertaken in Adelaide, South Australia in 1991–93, provides a case in point. Culminating in a consideration of the 'global resonance' of these trials, as the forensic methods undertaken to present evidence to the South Australian court were then employed in war crimes trials pertaining to the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the display is now utilized in a variety of educational programmes concerning issues of justice and human rights.[156] Increases in student visits for the museum's education programs also bear witness to this change in the direction of Holocaust memory at the SJM. The number of students visiting the SJM has nearly tripled in a 12-year period.[157] Despite the fact that there was no mandated study of the Holocaust in the NSW curriculum until 2014 this increase was engendered through developing programs address both the history of the Holocaust and the ethical imperatives that stem from such a considered study.[158] In this manner, the Holocaust could be studied within history but it could also address a far broader range of topic areas across the NSW syllabus. Education programs do not have the same permanency as exhibitions, and as such were historically afforded more scope in the 'personal, private and Jewish' space of the SJM. This flexibility notwithstanding, the increase in inter-ethnic conflict in Australia over the past decade[159] and ongoing political debates centring on issues of legal and 'illegal' immigration, meant that the SJM's exhibits as well as education programs, needed to contend with the continuing intersection of the past with the present. As Australia's political landscape changed, so too did the once particularistic survivor memory exhibited at the SJM need to change in order to retain, and possibly increase, its influence in the public sphere. As the SJM now enters its third decade of existence, this tension between the particular and the universal remains the axis upon which all future developments now turn.

An Obligation to Remember

In 2012 a Capital Appeal raised funds for a new Education and Resource centre and Holocaust permanent exhibition to include a Holocaust and Human Rights section, the first of its kind in Australia. Concurrently, a master planning process culminating in the exhibition concept development plan *An Obligation to Remember* was created through an extensive consultative process that included survivors, descendants, board members, management and curatorial staff.[160] The final plan

contains four guiding principles that both demonstrate the link to the SJM's particularistic past and give voice to its current aspirations toward universal resonance.

> **Guiding Principle One:** The SJM survivors' voices will be brought to the forefront and integrated throughout all dimensions of the exhibition.
> **Guiding Principle Two:** The SJM will challenge its visitors to grapple with both the particular and universal resonances of Holocaust history. The history of the Holocaust will be presented in a complex, yet accessible, format and its ongoing contemporary relevance emphasised.
> **Guiding Principle Three:** The participant categories of victim, perpetrator, bystander and resistor will be layered throughout the exhibition in order to deepen the historical narrative.
> **Guiding Principle Four:** Australian connections to the events of the Holocaust, and the ongoing legacy of the Holocaust in the Australian context, will be emphasised in order to further connect with local audiences.[161]

Tellingly, the first principle affirms that the survivors, the SJM's redemptive sufferers, will remain at the centre of the SJM story. As the exhibition research evolved and the curatorial team developed the interpretative strategies to actualize the guiding principles, the imperative that the survivors' voices would infuse every aspect of the display was addressed at both content and design levels.

Searching for a unifying symbolic idea and structure to fuse these principles and bring together the entirety of the museum space, the curatorial and design team referenced and developed the traditional Jewish naming of a cemetery as a *Beit Haim*, a House of Life.[162] Hearkening back to the founding survivors' original understanding of the entire museum space as a memorial, the SJM's proposed *Beit Haim* will be spatially manifested through a rearticulation of the central void space, based in the Star of David, Jerusalem stone-laid ground floor. The central void physically and visually links the entire exhibition space, beginning in the Star of David and continuing through the multilevelled and 'fractured' Holocaust exhibition, ending at the Sanctum of Remembrance. In the planned redevelopment, the void will be reinforced and rearticulated through lighting, colour and will be covered with embossed 'pointillist' styled portraits of SJM survivors who will literally 'fill' the central space. The reconfigured central space will provide

a poignant, spatial articulation of the concept of a *Beit Haim* – a place of loss and regeneration, rupture and continuity. It will also place the survivors squarely at the forefront of the SJMs new interpretative vision.

While the survivors' presence will frame the space, their lived experiences will be filtered throughout the exhibition through the use of new technology. Upon entering the SJM, visitors will download the app 'Voices' onto their mobile device and at significant junctions in the display they will hear first-hand audio accounts by SJM survivors of their experiences of radical persecution and displacement. Unlike other Holocaust displays, however, where most often audio or video testimony provides a personal story that supports the exhibition's overarching narrative arc, the Voices app will be highly curated. The visitor will be led through the exhibition by Bluetooth technology that limits when and where the visitor will hear 1–2-minute snippets of testimony culled from thousands of hours of testimony held in the SJM's collection.[163] The snippets illuminate specific artifacts, themes and/or historical junctures, thus bringing the survivor experience to bear in every aspect or 'layer' of the exhibition. Finally, in addition to the Voices app, video testimony stations deepen visitors' understanding of the stories of SJM survivors at key junctures.

While these strategies clearly demonstrate the particularistic element of the display, what must be remembered is that the survivor experience will be tempered and expanded through the three guiding principles that follow it – all of which were developed with an eye to conveying the universal resonance of this particular story. Hence, whereas in the original permanent exhibition few, if any perpetrator and bystander voices were heard, in the new exhibition they will play a vital role. Further, the historical antecedents of the Holocaust will be enlarged to include currently absent dimensions such as race science and the forces of nineteenth century nationalism. The specific links between the Australian and European experiences will be highlighted, including less celebratory aspects such as the role of 'scientific' racism in the oppression of Australia's indigenous population. Finally, the addition of a new Holocaust and Human Rights section will comprise an explicit articulation of the contemporary and universal relevance that the SJM's current board, staff and volunteer base seek to convey.

Thus while *An Obligation to Remember* works consciously to express but not resolve the tension between the particular and the universal, the question as to whether it can do so without betraying the SJMs founders' desire to convey an 'exceptional' yet 'Jewish' memory remains to be seen. For what must be borne in mind is that the realization of

this vision comes at a historical juncture at which the survivor population is rapidly diminishing, thus it is not the survivors themselves who will decide to what use their voices and their suffering will be put. Descendants and professionals, scholars and educators will decide to what end the survivors' experiences will be displayed.[164] The redemptive suffering of one generation will be interpreted and passed on by the next and if, as the next section of this study demonstrates, recent debates are an indicator of future developments, the uses to which this memory will be put will remain hotly contested.

Conclusion: Suffering for Whom?

The SJM sits currently at a crossroads in its relatively short history. Will it harness the universality of its particular metahistorical version of Holocaust memory – the redemptive suffering of the survivor – to displace local traumatic histories, or will it deploy, through 'symbolic extension', its moral imprimatur to highlight other forms of injustice and persecution? As noted, the figure of the survivor, the redemptive sufferer, is already a moral touchstone – a sacred memory – beyond the Sydney Jewish community. The 'symbolic extension' of Holocaust memory into the non-Jewish world means that any form of Holocaust commemoration must necessarily confront how that sacred memory will be transformed as it enters into the public sphere and, equally, how this transformation will then alter the original memory. Thus, while the sacred Holocaust memory housed in the SJM was derived from a particularistic source, its continued relevance to both the Jewish and broader Australian communities will be dependent on its ability to both hold and go beyond its origins – to retain the tension between particularity and universality. Such a development may not have been an explicit aim of the museum's founders, but it is the inevitable consequence of placing a once-private and particular sacred memory in public and universal space.

To display both the particular and the universal dimensions of Holocaust memory at the SJM, those invested with the development and care of sacred memory, such as those undertaking the current redevelopment, will need to continue to confront uncomfortable questions with regard to Australia's past and current political climate. For example, as previously noted, the Sanctum of Remembrance is currently located near the final section of the SJM's permanent exhibition *Long Journey to Freedom*. While this exhibition mentions the discriminatory quotas imposed on Jewish migration by the Australian government

immediately after the Second World War, its emphasis is on the role that Australia played in providing a safe haven for survivors in the post-war period. Although this is certainly historically correct, the exhibition's current focus on Australia as a safe haven for immigrant groups fleeing persecution – open, welcoming and largely cast in an idealized vision of contemporary 'multicultural Australia' – serves to obscure 'other narratives'. Beside the panel on quotas, there is no indication of the recurrent xenophobia that has characterized Australia's migration history and successive Australian governments' rather chequered records on refugees; nor is the fact that while Holocaust survivors undertook the mammoth task of resettling in this country, systematic racial discrimination against Australia's indigenous populations continued to take place. As this section is redeveloped in preparation for the new permanent exhibition, will a complex vision of Australia as both 'resistor' and 'perpetrator' be 'held in tension' within this exhibition space?

The question remains as to how to weave such difficult and multilayered issues into largely 'static' displays. If this is a complex curatorial task, the central question as to whether this can be achieved with sensitivity, stressing the universality of the 'fight against prejudice, discrimination and racism' while retaining the integrity of each historical instance of such persecution, is more an issue of will rather than workability.[165] That said, instances in which Holocaust memory has been invoked in the Australian context illustrate that the use of this memory as a legitimate 'bridging metaphor' is still a hotly debated issue. An exchange on the Jewish internet news source 'JWire' between *B'nai Birth* JDC chairman Anton Bock and the Association for Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Descendants' (AAJHS&D[166]) two most recent past presidents, George Foster and Anna Berger, provides a case in point. The debate centred on the appropriateness of evoking the memory of the Holocaust in relation to the tragic deaths of asylum seekers near Christmas Island on 15 December 2010 as they were attempting to reach shore. In the article, Block stated that 'the deaths of dozens of asylum seekers in treacherous seas near Christmas Island might have been prevented if Australia had better processing procedures in Indonesia and humanitarian resettlement of refugees'.[167] While Block admitted that his analogy was 'imperfect', he couched his critique and its legitimacy in the following statement:

> As Jewish Australians, many of us descended from those lucky survivors who did get refuge in Australia, we are tremendously pained to see asylum seekers a generation later drowning and suffering.[168]

The response from Foster and Berger centred on just how 'imperfect' the analogy was. Berger began her reply by stating:

> The recent tragic death of asylum seekers is unquestionably worthy of heartfelt compassion and empathy by all decent people. The instincts of B'nai B'rith ADC in deploring this tragedy in their media release of 16 December 2010 are commendable, but their comparison of the asylum seekers' plight to that of Jews trying to escape certain murder by the Nazis and their allies is irresponsible.[169]

Both Berger and Foster point out that the historical context of the current situation of asylum seekers and that of those Jews fleeing persecution under Nazism is radically different and object to Block's statement on several counts, with Foster stating that 'current asylum seekers have not been marked out for, or subjected to, genocidal mass murder and have not actually been turned back by governments because of their religion or race, and do have choices. Many of them have been admitted into Australia after their claims have been processed.' In contrast to these cases, Foster ponders, 'During the *Shoah* where were the governments sympathetic to the Jewish plight? There was in the end nowhere for them to go and even the Australian representative at the fateful Evian Conference in 1938 said that "As we have no real racial problems, we are not desirous of importing one". It is outrageous to compare the current Australian government to that of 1938.'[170] Berger also contends that such analogies are unnecessary and that 'Jews do not need faux analogies to the Holocaust in order to make a strong moral statement on human rights issues. When we choose to make our voices heard we do so as proud, engaged Jewish Australian citizens with a strong ethos of *Tsedaka* and *Chesed* based on the ethical system which has been our people's unique gift to humankind.'[171]

Both Foster and Berger are correct with regard to their historical qualifications as to the differences between the tragic events of Christmas Island and the events of the Holocaust sixty years prior. However, both miss the point that Block's comparison was not made to make the case for absolute historical parity – the historical 'uniqueness' of *any* historical event ensures that this is never a real possibility. Rather, Block's invocation of Holocaust memory was an appeal to Alexander's 'symbolic extension' – the ability to highlight the moral indignities of one historical instance of tragedy through invocation of another. Foster might rightly worry that such analogies 'trivialize' the events of the Holocaust while Berger may well be correct that there are other ways for

Jews to make such moral claims, but if Holocaust memory cannot and should not speak past its immediate context and community then why place, indeed 'display' it in the public sphere? Can historical integrity be maintained ('the analogy is imperfect'), while contemporary empathy is also extended? As founding 'partners'[172] with the Sydney Jewish Museum, the AAJHS were instrumental in bringing Holocaust memory into the Australian public context. This recent example of their misgivings as to whether it can and should be 'made relevant' to current and ongoing issues of racial intolerance and xenophobia that beset contemporary Australian life illustrates that the public utility of Holocaust memory at the SJM remains a topic in flux.

Despite such instances, other examples suggest such 'symbolic extensions' are emerging not only at the SJM but also in the NSW Jewish community. In 2009, the NSW Board of Deputies *Kristallnacht* commemoration honoured an Aboriginal Australian, William Cooper who, upon hearing of the persecution suffered by German and Austrian Jews, led his people in a protest to the German Consulate in Melbourne in early December of 1938.[173] That said, the 'direction' of the commemoration may still be considered particularistic. For in the final analysis, it was Cooper's stand for Jews, rather than an invocation of Holocaust memory in support of Aboriginal reconciliation, that was commemorated and celebrated. Cooper's actions were those of a 'Righteous Among the Nations'. Yet the ceremony can still be considered significant in its recognition of a connection between two peoples, both with histories of significant racial persecution. The differences between the two communities should not be minimized, however. Holocaust commemoration in 2009 takes place within the context of a now well-established and fairly secure minority community with strong ties to the sovereign nation-state of Israel. Aboriginal suffering exists in a reality of continued dispossession, poverty and discrimination that continues to blight Australia's political landscape. Perhaps when Holocaust memory works in the opposite 'direction', could the particularity of Jewish suffering housed at the SJM be said to have found its universal application.[174]

As the Sydney Jewish Museum moves into its third decade, the continued influence of the survivor generation on Australian institutions of Holocaust research and remembrance ensures that particularistic interpretations of Holocaust memory remains the cornerstone in any discussion as to the 'shape' of that memory, at least for the foreseeable future. At the same time, the survivors' insistence on 'exceptionality' means that this memory will continue to be developed and commemorated outside of solely traditional, 'internal' frameworks.[175] As succeeding

generations are now beginning to take on the task of conveying this memory in *public* as well as private settings, they are also, by necessity, grappling with the implications of this 'exceptional' and 'Jewish' memory for Australia's shifting political and cultural landscape. The survivors' original emphasis on the 'exceptional' nature of Holocaust memory provided a powerful foundation, but it will take considerable vision for succeeding generations to endow this particular memory with universal resonance – to engender universality without retreating into either an undifferentiated universalism or a narrow particularism. To not do so, however, to render what may be 'exceptional' as 'exclusive', is to relegate Holocaust memory housed in the Sydney Jewish Museum to the periphery of Australian public life. The 'private, personal and Jewish' survivor can be retained but her continued public influence, her capacity to 'redeem' beyond her own community, will be dependent on her ability to both contain and transcend her particularistic roots.

Conclusion: The Return of Myth to History

> Myth may be the only way to approximate the tragedy of a chaotic world.[1]
>
> (Ismar Schorsch, *The Holocaust and Jewish Survival*)

For millennia, the Jews made sense of their history in light of their theology. In the modern period, they undertook this struggle within the two domains that enlightenment and emancipation offered them – the public (secular) and the private (sacred). In exchange for the fruits of modernity, they tacitly agreed to consign history to the former and theology to the latter. As a result, their foundational 'myths' were recast as 'universal' ethical imperatives or largely abandoned, only to continue as templates for the recording and understanding of history in the closed communities of the *haredim*. Outside of ultra-Orthodox domains and systematic theology, the Jewish experience in the modern period, and the Holocaust in particular, was not chronicled through traditional, metahistorical frameworks. History trumped theology.[2] Redemption, it seems, was not part of the modern Jewish plan.

On the contrary, what this work has demonstrated is that while in the modern period the Jews did indeed 'enter history', they continued to understand and imbue that history with metahistorical significance. In the memorial museum, the ambition to record, display but also *commemorate* a traumatic past forced a confrontation between the chronicling of history and the desire to discern its metahistorical meaning. As commemorative agendas merged with, and more often than not dictated, historical endeavours, the line between myth and history became increasingly blurred. The 'built theodicy' of the memorial museum, with its twin pillars of memory and history, complemented perfectly the age-old Jewish predilection to view the past with an eye

to the present – and to place that present in sight of a redeemed future. In these supposedly secular spaces the Jews did indeed enter history, but they brought their myths with them. Myths that enabled them to confront the events of a traumatic past, discern their metahistorical meaning and reposition them toward a redeemed future.

The institutions examined testify to the tenacity and diversity of these redemptive visions. This should not be surprising given that redemption, and the various pathways to it, remains a diffuse and unresolved (and perhaps unresolvable) category of Jewish thought.[3] While one might be tempted at first to understand redemption as a somewhat superficial and naïve attempt to soothe the pain of history with the balm of eternity, a closer examination of the tradition reveals that such a simplistic view cannot possibly do justice to this complex and diffuse theology. For under the umbrella of redemption sit even more diverse theologies, including messianism, resurrection of the dead, the return of the exiles and restoration of the nation, *olam ha-bah* (the world to come) and, ultimately, the service of one true God by all of humankind. Hence, while the category of redemption encompasses all these concerns, no single item can define the redemptive quest. Ultimately, in Jewish thought, redemption remains the somewhat indefinable and transcendent 'horizon' toward which its connected theologies are oriented. Redemption, in Arthur Cohen's concise formulation, is a 'turning toward', a repositioning of both the believer and his God, a re-establishment of the Divine–human relationship.[4] While the content of redemption remains, as a result, largely indescribable, its overall effect is to bestow a teleological shape to history – an 'end point' toward which the chaos of human experience can reorient. Its purpose is not so much to relieve the pain of history as to imbue it with metahistorical meaning. A truly redemptive vision of history, therefore, does not equate with a 'trivial' one – indeed, as the case studies considered in this thesis amply illustrate, it more likely constitutes the very opposite.

For every redemptive vision must grapple with the concerns of theodicy – attempts to understand if and how an all-good and all-powerful Deity remains in a covenantal relationship with His people that is ultimately focussed toward redemption – despite seemingly incontrovertible historical evidence to the contrary. Taken seriously, this is no easy task; for while redemption remains a transcendent, if indefinable promise, theodicy attempts to come to terms with its all too immanent and unmistakable inconsistencies. In Jewish history, no greater 'inconsistency' exists than the genocide of European Jewry. This study cannot, and does not, pretend to present a comprehensive

review of the challenges the Holocaust has wrought upon this complex theological category; in this sense it did not seek to understand how the Holocaust has impacted 'internal' Jewish paradigms. What it has attempted to explore and delineate is what happens when the *desire* to redeem remains, but the explicitly theistic framework is removed. What happens when the sacred symbols, rituals, archetypes and narratives of Jewish civilization, minus their Deity, proceed to enter the non-Jewish world? How have these 'secular theodicies' changed both our understanding of the events of the Holocaust itself and its continued meaning, its redemptive 'memory' in the present?

In absenting God, but retaining Eliade's 'mythical impulse', each memorial museum under consideration put in place a non-theistic but still redemptive 'horizon'. This horizon, the institution's 'mission' as such, was and is determined by the interaction of several factors at once; the historic and public context of the organization; the continued influence of its founders and current stakeholders; and, most importantly for the purposes of this study, the interplay between its commemorative and historical undertakings. Given that these factors were necessarily different for each institution, we are left with the reality that 'not all theodicies are created equal'. In all three settings, the secular theodicy 'on display' transforms the Holocaust into a pathway to a 'redeemed' state – a mechanism through which the betterment of individuals, communities and nations can be actualized in the present. Despite this common goal, the nature and scope of their respective visions could not be more different. Once uncovered, the limitations and potential of each organization's underlying theodic shape and redemptive vision are thrown into sharp relief. For if the Holocaust is revealed as a 'negative epiphany', supplies evidence of an 'eternal enemy', or is cast as the personification of 'redemptive suffering', the redemptive horizon must change accordingly. Hence, having revealed the redemptive shape of each institution, we can return to address the question at the crux of this work: who or what, exactly, do these secular redemptions redeem?

At the USHMM, the 'negative epiphany' of Auschwitz proceeds to announce its universal message across time and, increasingly, space. With recent initiatives including an international symposium on genocide prevention (in conjunction with the French *Mémorial de la Shoah*),[5] the reach of the founders' original 'revelatory' vision continues to expand – now to international horizons. In Washington, history has indeed been turned into a 'moral endeavour'. Even so, within this universal vision, the original problems that beset the museum's founders

remain. If Jewish suffering remains the 'only way into' the 'sacred mystery' of the Holocaust, the museum must ultimately relieve itself of its 'Jewish core' as suffering was never the sole, or even the primary, source of identity for Jewish life. Further, in its elevation of Jewish suffering to revelatory, exclusive, indeed 'unique' heights, the institution's underlying shape will continue to be drawn in theological, rather than historical categories. The inevitable result of such distinctions will be the continued and strained stratification of victim groups and 'other genocides' in relation to the 'unique' genocide of the Jews; rather than productive, comparative historical work aimed at understanding how, why and when particular groups become objects of genocidal campaigns. Given its long-established commemorative norms, a return to the diversity of sacred paradigms in which American Holocaust memory was couched prior to the advent of the USHMM, may not be a realistic or even desirable option. However, a consideration of how the USHMM's transformation of Holocaust commemoration in the American context from 'many to one' may have served to *narrow* its reach could yield even more powerful and universally 'redemptive' results.

In stark contrast, the shape of Yad Vashem's sacred Holocaust memory seems certain, at least in the immediate future, to remain overwhelmingly particularistic, despite its inherently universal potential. As the institution continues to *reflect* rather than critically assess and *direct* the utility of Holocaust memory in the Israeli setting, a 'dualistic' rather than 'symbolic' interpretation of the Amalek myth will dominate its underlying, metahistorical frame. While such a perspective may serve current political interests, its productiveness within a long-term Zionist vision is open for question. For not only does such an understanding of Holocaust memory create a 'defensive' Zionist mentality in the present; it also transforms this mentality into an eternal vision, one in which the only rationale for Jewish national liberation is the ceaseless inevitability of persecution. Such a perspective feeds an impoverished vision of statehood where only the desire to exist and not a vision of what to *exist for* becomes primary. Yad Vashem's 'Jewish story' of the Holocaust will continue to serve its long-standing commitment to the collection of the victims' names, to resurrect their memory and 'gather them unto their nation' but this redemptive memory will, in the short term at least, be used primarily to affirm the underlying rationale for quotidian, and particular, political realities.

Placed at a midpoint between these two extremes the SJM's particular *and* universal 'redemptive sufferer' has again come under scrutiny as the institution approaches a crossroads in its history. At present, debate

continues as to the public limits of the once 'private, personal and Jewish' memory of the Australian Jewish survivor; what are the universal parameters of her particular, 'redemptive suffering'? The current redevelopment has forced the question of universality to the forefront, exposing key questions and debates that have simmered on the sidelines for much of the institutions' history: Should an Australian memory of the Holocaust be expanded to fight racism or is it a vehicle for teaching citizenship to Australia's ethnically diverse student population, or both? Is tolerance the key message? Or are the boundaries of memory placed further? Is the memory of the Holocaust in its Australian setting actually about ethics and/or human rights in general and, if so, whose human rights will be addressed? Underscoring all these debates remain the original questions asked by the museum's founders some thirty years prior, namely: is this institution a memorial, a museum, an educational institution or all of the above? How do we honour an intensely personal memorial vision while proclaiming the universality of this memory in public space? Can a particular and 'exceptional' experience be retained but its global resonance still be felt? And so the original questions asked of and by survivors remain: what meaning does our redemptive suffering hold and for whom, or for what, exactly, did we suffer? As redevelopment continues and generational and institutional priorities are revisited and redefined, the SJM's 'redemptive sufferer' stands poised to confront her most challenging transformation to date.

In each of these institutions, the underlying theodicy serves as the conduit toward a secular, redemptive vision of Holocaust memory. The inherent shape of these theodicies notwithstanding, ultimately it is how each institution exploits its respective theodicy's particular, universal or particular/universal potential that will determine the scope and reach of the sacred memory on display. In the final analysis, it is the *interpretation of the myth*, not the myth itself that determines the meaning. Menachem Kellner uncovers a similar dynamic at work in the presence of messianic ideas in contemporary Israeli politics.[6] While Kellner's central goal is to articulate the underlying messianic shape of Israeli political discourse, it is his examination of the particular and universal *diversity* evident in messianic thought that is of relevance. While arguing that all messianic strains of Jewish thought work toward a universal vision of peace, he keenly identifies that it is whether one comes at this horizon from either a particularist or universalist perspective that determines both the path toward this vision as well as the vision itself. Kellner illustrates his point through reflecting on the biblical passage in which King Balak demands that the gentile prophet Balaam curse

the nation of Israel. Chastised by the Lord, Balaam can only do as God instructs him whereupon he pronounces:

> There is a people that dwells apart, not reckoned among the nations. (Numbers 23:9)

Kellner notes that the verse 'can be understood as a description, a curse or a blessing. A universalist perception of Judaism sees this as a curse, while a particularist reading will see it as a statement of fact, or, most often, as a blessing.'[7] A universalist interprets the alienation of which the verse speaks as something to be overcome in the 'end of days', where 'nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore', while a particularist sees the separation as something that may well be maintained into the eschatological future 'as even in the end of days Israel will be alienated from the nations; rather than being subjugated to them, however, they will be subjugated to Israel'.[8] Both see the fate of Israel and the fate of 'the nations' as deeply symbiotic in both this world and the next, yet the pathway to, and vision of, this relationship could not be more different.

Similarly, each museum's decision to emphasize either the particular or the universal capacity of the metahistorical memory 'on display' will ultimately dictate the efficacy and reach of these 'secular redemptions' both within and beyond the Jewish world. Is the USHMM's 'negative epiphany' a revelation of one *to* many or does it speak as one *of* many? Is Yad Vashem's 'eternal enemy' the enemy of one nation only, or of all humanity? And is the SJM's 'redemptive suffering' exceptional or exclusive in nature? In each institution just as surely as myth will dictate the shape of the history it confronts, so too will the exegete(s)' interpretation determine the definitive efficacy of the myth. Indeed, in this sense the transformation of the sacred symbols, rituals, archetypes and narratives of the Jewish tradition in the public space of the memorial museum can be understood as a form of 'secular exegesis'. For if a memorial museum is no longer simply a place of history but also metahistory, it is the work of its interpreters, the 'exegetes', that will ultimately shape the direction of the sacred memory on display.

While the historian asks, 'what happened?', the exegete adds 'what does it mean?'. As sites of history, and now metahistory, memorial museums must grapple with both questions and they will emerge with increasingly divergent answers. History museums have long considered their central mission to be the conservation, interpretation and display of material history. In adding a commemorative dimension to

this portfolio, memorial museums must also take up the task of explicating the various *meanings* this history could hold. As identified in the three institutions examined in this study, when commemorative agendas draw upon and reconfigure sacred symbols, rituals, archetypes and narratives, the task of the museum and its exegetes moves beyond that of historical and into the metahistorical – into the realm of myth. Once understood not simply as an 'amelioration' of history but rather a profound attempt to forge meaning from otherwise 'meaningless' atrocities, uncovering these myths can indeed reveal 'the most powerful beliefs we hold'.[9] Acknowledging and delineating the presence and efficacy of these 'beliefs' in the memorial museum setting provides a pathway into understanding how, when faced with a traumatic past, it is not the events of that past, but rather our desire to discern their *significance,* that ultimately informs the public utility of the memory on display.

This conceptual shift in understanding Holocaust memorial museums as sites of not only history but also metahistory also allows us to view these places as alternate 'administrators of the sacred'. For inasmuch as these spaces transform the sacred, so too does uncovering the presence and 'shape' of the sacred transform the space. No longer simply relegated to the 'numinous' or 'ineffable', once uncovered and analyzed, the sacred substance of these spaces changes our understanding of their public role and efficacy. For if we recognize that there is a sacred dimension to these spaces – a dimension where those who seek to display and commemorate the Holocaust conceive of that task from *within* the cultural and religious codes of Jewish civilization but seek to translate them to individuals and communities *without* – memorial museums become sites of an exceedingly complex and dynamic cultural interchange. By 'administrating the sacred', the memorial museum moves beyond its current utility and emerges as not simply a place of history, or a 'site of memory',[10] but as a nexus between the sacred and the secular, the personification of the fluid and syncretic nature of the sacred in contemporary settings. In these spaces, Jewish suffering may yet again be offered up as a redemptive message for the world, but the world will make what it will of the suffering of the Jews.

Given this development, these 'administrators of the sacred' not only transmit but also reconfigure the metahistories they contain and convey. The museums examined in this thesis are only three examples of many. The Holocaust museums and memorials that now dot the globe serving as places of education and commemoration may often, but not always, be Jewish in derivation. Similarly, they may not be directed by only Jewish stakeholders, and even where these stakeholders are Jewish,

they may not be well versed in Jewish thought and tradition. As a result, whatever Jewish sacred symbols, rituals, archetypes and narratives they draw upon to display the history and commemorate the memory of the Holocaust will evolve within the broader context of surrounding, non-Jewish cultures. In this syncretic context, just as the particular/universal relationship emanates 'outward' so too does it reflect 'inward', with the demands of public placement modifying once-traditional forms and their meanings. In so doing, a 'particular and unique' revelation may become a 'universal and ubiquitous' one, an 'eternal enemy' might emerge as synonymous with a quotidian reality and what was once 'exceptional' redemptive suffering may find its global resonance extending well beyond the original 'covenantal community'.

How, then, do these built theodicies fundamentally alter how we 'know' the Holocaust? In its relatively short history, the memory of the Holocaust has been 'Americanized', 'indigenized', 'nationalized' and 'politicized', to name but a few of its incarnations.[11] Through uncovering the sacred narratives of the secular museum, I posit that the Holocaust has now also been *eternalized*. In each of the case studies, the mythic scope of the sacred symbols, rituals, archetypes and narratives underscoring the institutions' display and commemoration of the Holocaust 'lifts' the Holocaust from the plane of history and imbues it with the enduring qualities of myth. Once 'secular' history is cloaked in the 'timeless' garb of the sacred, it is removed from its historical specificity and has the power to return again and again to intersect with the present. Further, as the history of the Holocaust is invested with metahistorical meaning, reconfigured and repositioned toward a redemptive horizon, the memory of the Holocaust emerges to not only intersect with the present but also point toward the future. When recast to proclaim a 'negative revelation', provide evidence of an 'eternal enemy', or serve as a template for 'redemptive suffering', the Holocaust may well speak *of* one time, but its metahistorical message stretches across *all* time. In the memorial museum, through the symbiosis of history and metahistory, the Holocaust has indeed been transformed into a 'spiritual vision'.[12]

While the ability for memorial museums to engage theodic frameworks and 'eternalize' the Holocaust, allowing it to speak beyond its original time and place, is therefore potentially transformative, it is also not without its dangers. With myth comes mystification as the genre changes the very nature of the traumatic history it seeks to confront and convey. Amos Goldberg makes the implications of such transformations clear in his study of Holocaust testimony. Examining the tendency within survivor testimony (testimonies written both during and after

the war) and critical studies of these texts to 'redeem' the victim's experience, he isolates how such a perspective changes our understanding of what this extreme victimization entailed.[13] Goldberg focuses his argument in an examination of the Hebrew word for 'crisis': *mashber*. While its dictionary definition in modern Hebrew is 'disaster and calamity',[14] its biblical origin (Isaiah 37:3) and medical meaning refers to the 'woman's uterine opening which the newborn must breach in order to see the light of day'.[15] In the hoped-for course of events that follow the breaking of the *mashber*, or 'birthstool', the progression is toward birth and the bringing forth of a new life, the arrival of which 'retroactively, erases the moments of crisis, despair and pain'. In this definition, crisis serves as 'a [cultural] paradigm of redemption'.[16] In stark contrast, trauma, in Goldberg's formulation, is distinguished from crisis through 'the uncontrollable and obsessive intrusion of the 'external' into the 'internal' and its ultimate fusion to the 'death instinct' rather than the 'life instinct' that characterizes a 'crisis' experience. He proceeds from this premise to argue that the majority of scholars working with survivor testimony yield to the temptation to read these accounts as examples of 'crisis' rather than 'trauma' and hence obscure our understanding of the radical break experienced by the Holocaust victim. As a result, Goldberg rightly ponders whether, in its desire to 'redeem' the victim through depicting his experience as one of crisis rather than trauma, 'this historiography did not allocate space in its deep structure for the traumatic dimensions of the events'.[17]

Goldberg's assessment resonates with those of Langer and Young and, in a similar vein, his warning is well taken. To impose redemptive meaning on essentially 'meaningless' suffering is also to transform that suffering, to invest it with a significance not readily apparent in a review of the historical 'facts'. In so doing, that traumatic experience is necessarily changed; on an individual level from one of 'trauma to crisis', on a communal level from one of 'atrocity to tragedy'. Indeed, in each memorial museum considered the redemptive vision of Holocaust memory does significantly alter the history on display. The destruction of European Jewry was not *experienced* as a negative revelation, a prescription for eternal vigilance or an opportunity for redemptive suffering. In imposing these paradigms retrospectively, memorial museums run the risk of turning all victims into heroic resistors or willing martyrs, perpetrators into eternal enemies. Thus, while the dangers of such transformations are clearly evident, the question remains as to whether to transform is necessarily to traduce. Must we relinquish memory to salvage history and indeed, vice versa?

One possible response to this question emerges from within the tradition itself. The following *midrash* references a similar conundrum faced by those generations who both witnessed and came immediately after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.

> Rabbi used to expound the verse 'the Lord laid waste without pity' in twenty four ways. Rabbi Yohanan could expound it in sixty. Could it be that Rabbi Yohanan was greater than Rabbi!? Rather, because Rabbi was closer in time to the destruction of the Temple he would remember as he expounded and stop to weep and console himself. He would begin again only to weep, console himself, and halt. Rabbi Yohanan, because he was not close in time to the destruction of the Temple, was able to continue to expound without pause.
>
> (Lamentations *Rabbah*)[18]

The *midrashist* is faced with a seemingly unsolvable contradiction: How could it be that the one closest to the destruction – the great figure of 'Rabbi', Judah HaNasi, the redactor of the *Mishnah* (Oral Law) – is only able to offer 24 interpretations of the destruction, while Rabbi Yohanan, who lived in the generations after the Temple was destroyed, was able to offer sixty? Surely, such a situation is counterintuitive to the task at hand? A closer reading reveals a deeper dynamic at work. The experience of history (to stop to weep) is both the burden and struggle of the generation of witness; the work of memory (to expound without pause) is the task of the generations that come after, those who 'do not stop to weep'. 'To weep' is to recall a traumatic history; 'to expound' is to make sense of that history in light of a Divine promise, to position the current destruction closer and closer to a redeemed and transcendent future. Yet while the ancient exegete could continue to expound without fear of 'mystification', safe in the knowledge that each interpretation amplified rather than diminished the sacred history at hand, the modern exegete can claim no such surety. In *creating* the redemptive 'horizon', the modern exegete must also bear responsibility for her creation, both in its ability to transmit the history of the Holocaust in the present, and to explicate the character of its memory for the future. The depth and complexity of the redemptive vision will ultimately dictate what and whom, exactly, these secular redemptions will redeem.

As the generation of those caught up in the events of the Holocaust – perpetrators, victims, resistors and bystanders – is now reaching its end, the transformation of their experience from history into memory proceeds apace. Given that interest in the Holocaust seems certain to

increase, rather than decrease, at least in the immediate future, memorial museums will continue to play a central role in shaping what this memory will become. With the Holocaust increasingly characterized as a 'watershed Event' of global importance, the need to delineate and direct how this memory is utilized becomes ever more urgent. In this vein, uncovering the nature and content of the sacred narratives of the secular museum may tell us little about the history of the Holocaust itself, but reveals a great deal about what this history has come to mean. Once 'eternalized', the history of the Holocaust has indeed 'been left behind in the wake of its memory'.[19] Unlike the events of the Holocaust itself, however, the shaping of its memory is neither inevitable nor assured, but rather ongoing, and deeply informed by the pre-existing traditions and beliefs of those who will come to form it. In bringing to light the previously unrecognized metahistorical dimensions of this 'global' memory a more considered use of these sacred paradigms might then be engendered.

Undertaking such a task requires an awareness that while myth may indeed distort history, it may also act as history's vehicle; a means of bringing the force of history to bear on the present. As with all such 'moral frameworks', some myths will engender distortions, facile uses of Holocaust history for politically expedient ends, while others will be indicative of a truly engaged struggle; 'Jobian' efforts that proceed without certainty and with the disconcerting knowledge that the unending search for meaning can never provide assurance that such meaning will be found. It is the latter that will constitute to a truly redemptive vision of the Holocaust, a vision that defines redemption as 'salvation from the states or circumstances that destroy the value of human existence or human existence itself'.[20] It is difficult to imagine an atrocity that sought more thoroughly to destroy both 'the value of human existence or human existence itself' than the genocide of European Jewry. To redeem such an event may be impossible, even, some might argue, undesirable. Of only one thing we can be certain; to do so will require an undertaking of truly 'mythic' proportions.

Notes

Introduction

1. Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1985), p. 69.
2. Sydney Jewish Museum accession number: M2006/002:001.
3. The author was the Project Director/Curator of the exhibition team that was responsible for the use and placement of the Torah in the SJM's permanent exhibition *Culture and Continuity: Journey through Judaism*. My thanks go to SJM Curators Roslyn Sugarman and Shannon Maguire, Education Officer Mariela Sztrum and Exhibition designer Jisuk Han for their spirited discussion on this matter.
4. Suzanne D. Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 1997), pp. 233–41.
5. Mark Raphael Baker, *The Fiftieth Gate* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1997), p. 174. In the book, Baker tells the history of his parents' survival through recording and recounting his parents' memories while attempting to place their stories within the historical record. In so doing, Baker is confronted by the frailty of memory and the desire individuals have to find retrospective meaning in their experiences. To contend with these competing ambitions, Baker employs a mix of classical and modern *midrashim* (rabbinic parables such as the one quoted here) throughout the work in an attempt to both chronicle Holocaust history and grapple with its meaning.
6. While the term 'metahistory' is not exclusively a religious or 'sacred' category, it is utilized in this manner throughout the study to refer to classical Jewish sacred narratives (biblical and rabbinic) and, in particular, the search for transcendent meaning in the past that they describe. The exact meaning with which the term in used in this book is outlined in the introductory chapter.
7. The use of the term 'political' throughout this work is conceived of broadly and includes, in Mark Chmiel's useful definition, both how 'persons can translate private grievances into public issues' and how 'persons can handle, or mobilize others to handle social or private issues by having recourse to general or universal political ideas, rights and democratic norms'. Mark Chmiel, 'The Political Varieties of Sacred Remembrance: Elie Wiesel and United States Foreign Policy', *Journal of Church and State,* 40, no. 4 (1998), p. 829.
8. The use of the capitalized term 'Event' to refer to the Holocaust comes into common usage throughout the President's Commission on the Holocaust, a project that culminated in the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The term is developed, in particular, by Elie Wiesel and Michael Berenbaum, and is examined in greater detail in Chapter 2.

1 The Holocaust Memorial Museum: A Built Theodicy

1. All biblical quotations are taken from the *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985).
2. Holocaust memorial museums were not the first memorial museums to emerge but in terms of their proliferation and influence they have become increasingly important with regard to the development of this genre. For a comprehensive survey of the history and content of major memorial museums, see Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007).
3. See, for example, Grieg Crysler and Abidin Kusno, 'Angels in the Temple: The Aesthetic Construction of Citizenship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum', *Art Journal*, 56, no. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 52–64; and Stephanie Shosh Rotem, *Constructing Memory: Architectural Narratives of Holocaust Museums* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013).
4. The most well known of these critiques are the pioneering works of James Young. See James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); *The Changing Shape of Holocaust Memory* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1995); *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); James E. Young (ed.), *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History* (New York: Prestel, 1994).
5. The most influential is, of course, Hayden White's use of the term in his now-classic study, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973). While White's analysis of 'deep structure' holds relevance for this work, the emphasis here is not on the largely nineteenth-century paradigms that White identifies, but rather on far more ancient and enduring archetypes. Hence, the terms metahistory and 'the sacred' referred to throughout this book relate to enduring Jewish (and at times Christian) responses to destruction—many of which could be grouped under the umbrella term of theodicy. These definitions and explanations are developed further in the current chapter.
6. There is a growing interest in these issues. See Oren Baruch Stier, *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005). However, while Stier does engage with post-Holocaust theology in his discussion of the placement of train carriages in Holocaust museums and memorials, he does not frame his discussion within a long-range view of Jewish theological response to destruction. Also see Stier, 'Torah and Taboo: Containing Jewish Relics and Jewish Identity at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum' *Numen* 57 (2010), pp. 505–36. The more recent work of Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and the Challenges of Representation* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2014) also attempts to bring sociological categories of religion to bear but again does not provide a thorough going analysis of how these categories relate to traditional Jewish responses.
7. While this proclivity is predominant, it does not discount the existence of visually based commemorative strategies in the Jewish tradition. See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jonathan Karp (eds), *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008) and S. Brent Plate (ed.), *Religion, Art and Visual Culture: A Cross-Cultural Reader* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 195–211.

8. The contemporary museum is, of course, a complex and ever changing entity. For a concise summary of its history, see Edward P. Alexander, 'What is a Museum?', in Edward P. Alexander (ed.), *Museums in Motion: Introduction to the History and Function of Museums* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979), pp. 5–15. Also see Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (Oxon, UK: Routledge. 1995). For an overview of the development of memorial museums in particular, see Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007).
9. Clearly, what constitutes 'the Jewish tradition' is an extremely complex and heterogenous category. Throughout the work the term is understood to refer to both ancient Israelite religion and its transformation and continuation into the classical rabbinic period. Where necessary, distinctions are made between the two. The term takes into account both the *halakchic* (legal) and *aggadic* (legend) aspects of the classical Jewish corpus and again, where necessary, makes the relevant distinctions. In discussion pertaining to the modern period, consideration is given both to the transformation of tradition due to the process of secularization and also its 'co-option' into the variety of streams that comprise modern Judaism. In particular, in this study it is the dynamics of Jewish 'history and memory' within the broad purview of 'the tradition' that is at stake and a conceptual framework to ground such discussion is found further on in the current chapter.
10. The most powerful exponents of such views within the field of Holocaust representation are undoubtedly the literary critic Lawrence Langer and, with regard to Holocaust memorials in particular, James Young. While both Young's and Langer's work has been of inestimable value in establishing and sketching the boundaries of the field, their tendency to equate the redemptive with the simplistic or ameliorating is highly problematic. Their critiques of redemptive Holocaust representation forms will be taken up and examined further along in this chapter.
11. Dan Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), p. xiv.
12. The memorial museums chosen are all based in countries that have active Jewish communities. As such, their development took place within either a partial (USHMM and SJM) or near-total (in the case of Yad Vashem) Jewish context. Institutions in 'perpetrator' countries are not often the initiatives of such communities and while they would provide an interesting contrast, it was simply not possible within the constraints of this study to include them.
13. An example of a similar approach with regard to the influence of biblical narratives on national narratives is found in A. Dirk Moses, 'Biblical Narratives in German and American National Utopias' in Norbert Finzsch and Hermann Wellenreuther (eds), *Visions of the Future in Germany and America* (Oxford: Berg 2001). Another work that forges new understandings of the connections between 'sacred and secular' realms from a political perspective can be found in Danielle Celermajer, *The Sins of the Nation and the Ritual of Apologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009).
14. Due to the specific nature of this study as one that takes primarily Jewish forms of commemoration as its starting point, the term 'Holocaust' will be used throughout to refer to the extermination of European Jewry under the Nazis within the context of the Second World War. This is not an attempt

to marginalize other victims of the exterminatory policies of National Socialism. Their experiences will be examined at key junctures pertaining to issues of inclusion/exclusion in the institutions under discussion.

15. The following is only a sample of the vast array of scholarship that has emerged in this area: Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer (eds), *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany Since 1989: The Origins and Political Function of the Vel D'hiv in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005); Ned Curthoys, 'The Politics of Holocaust Representation', *Arena Journal,* 16, (2001), pp. 49–73; Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Neville Dubnow, *Imagining the Unimaginable: Holocaust Memory in Art and Architecture* (Cape Town: Jewish Publications-South Africa, 2001); Hilene Flanzbaum (ed.), *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999); Saul Friedlander (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and The "Final Solution"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Kirsten Harjes, 'Stumbling Stones: Holocaust Memorials, National Identity, and Democratic Inclusion in Berlin', *German Politics and Society,* 23, no. 1 (2005), pp. 138–42; Berel Lang, *Holocaust Representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2003); Lawrence Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Lawrence Langer, *Using and Abusing the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Young, *The Changing Shape of Holocaust Memory*; Young, *At Memory's Edge*.
16. Maurice Halbwachs, *La Mémoire Collective* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968).
17. Examples include Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. S. Rendall and E. Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer, vols 1–3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Frances Amelia Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1966). A useful survey of the development of scholarship in this area is found in Kerwin Lee Klein, 'On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse', *Representation,* (Winter 2000), pp. 127–53. While arguably Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989) could also be understood as a seminal work in this area, the importance of his argument for this research lies chiefly in his definition of *Jewish* memory. As such, his work is considered in detail in the section focusing on Jewish memory.
18. This relationship relies upon the useful definition developed by Amos Funkenstein in his deliberations on the role of these two types of memory in the formation of Jewish memory in particular. Comparing the functions of individual and collective memory to that of speech and language respectively, Funkenstein clearly illustrates the interconnectivity and reliance

of each upon the other. Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 4.

19. Cases in point are the various Holocaust commemoration days currently observed both within and beyond the Jewish world. In Israel, Holocaust commemoration is inscribed into the national calendar through the observance of *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day), but commemoration of the Holocaust has also been integrated into non-Jewish national agendas – two examples being Holocaust Remembrance Day in the UK and a UN-sanctioned International Holocaust Remembrance Day. For further reading on the debates surrounding these commemoration days, see David Cesarani, 'Seizing the Day: Why Britain will Benefit from Holocaust Memorial Day', *Patterns of Prejudice,* 34, no. 4 (2000), pp. 61–6; Dan Stone, 'Day of Remembrance or Day of Forgetting? Or, Why Britain Does Not Need a Holocaust Memorial Day', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 34, no. 4 (2000), pp. 53–9.
20. While now largely dissipated, these debates were perhaps most fully played out in the German historians' debate (*Historikerstreit*), but also found voice in public settings such as the discussions concerning the development of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. For a detailed historical review of the 'Uniqueness Debate', see Gavriel Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies,* 13, no. 1 (1999), pp. 28–61. A turning point in the debate can be found in the shift from using the word 'unique' to 'unprecedented' when describing the 'comparability' (or not) of the Holocaust in the work of influential Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer. See Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
21. Theodor Adorno, *Prisms,* trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), p. 34. For a full discussion of misquotations and partial quotations of Adorno's statement, see Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, p. 25.
22. Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) David Roskies provides a particularly succinct account of the constructivist position with regard to Jewish literature in David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 260–1.
23. Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism,* see, in particular, Introduction pp. 3–5.
24. Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, p. 4.
25. Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, p. 4, For example, Rothberg notes in particular Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah* where Lanzmann asserts that his work 'forgoes any attempt to represent the Holocaust and declares any attempt to understand the events obscene'.
26. Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*; David Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989); David Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Useable Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
27. The following critique notwithstanding, Waxman makes a valuable contribution to the sanctification of Holocaust memory, particularly with regard to what she labels the 'cultural, even spiritual impulses, which led Jews like Ringelblum and Kaplan to record their suffering and to seek to transmit their

testimonies to future readers'. Zoe Waxman, 'Testimonies as Sacred Texts: The Sanctification of Holocaust Writing', *Past and Present,* 206, no. 5 (2010), p. 341.

28. For more information on the Oneg Shabbat archive, see Sam Kassow, *Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).
29. Waxman, 'Testimonies as Sacred Texts', p. 324.
30. Waxman, 'Testimonies as Sacred Texts', p. 324.
31. Waxman, 'Testimonies as Sacred Texts', p. 327.
32. Waxman, 'Testimonies as Sacred Texts', p. 327.
33. The use of this term is explicated in detail in the following section concerning post-Holocaust theology.
34. This point is developed further in the section discussing Jewish memory in particular.
35. There may be a third, more practical reason for this lack of attention, which is that most scholars concerned with issues of Holocaust representation may not be well versed in Jewish theology, and vice versa.
36. This observation does not deny the significance of the work of post-Holocaust theologians such as Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, Richard Rubenstein and Emil Fackenheim among others, rather it is an acknowledgement that none of these theologies have as yet been fully assimilated into normative Jewish practice.
37. See Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Useable Past,* pp. 14–16.
38. For an introduction to the idea of covenant as a vital and enduring category in Jewish thought and life, see Arnie Eisen, 'Covenant' in Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (eds), *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements and Beliefs* (New York: Free Press, 1988), pp. 107–12.
39. Indeed, the term theodicy, coined by the philosopher, G. W. Leibniz in 1710, can seem anachronistic and limiting when applied to biblical and rabbinic texts concerned with similar ideas. However, as no better expression is available, theodicy is the term that will be utilized throughout this work to express the human struggle to come to terms with the existence and experience of 'evil' in light of an 'all good and all powerful' God, and, in particular, how this struggle affects understandings of the covenantal relationship between the Jewish people and God. The proclivity to frame post-Holocaust theology within the framework of covenant is evidenced even in the views of the most radical of post-Holocaust theologians, Richard Rubenstein. For example, when discussing the concept of the 'death of God' in light of the historical experience of the Holocaust, Rubenstein can still only conceive of such a death within the notion of covenant. He writes: 'No man can really say that God is dead. How can we know that? Nevertheless, I am compelled to say that we live in a time of the 'death of God.' This is more a statement about man and his culture than about God. The death of God is a cultural fact … when I say that we live at a time of the death of God, I mean that the thread uniting God and man, heaven and earth, has been broken.' Richard Rubenstein, Editors of Commentary Magazine (eds), *Condition of Jewish Belief, A Symposium Compiled by the Editors of Commentary Magazine* (London: Collier-MacMillan, 1966).

40. For a comprehensive selection of ultra-Orthodox and traditional theological responses in general, see Steven T. Katz, Shlomo Biderman and Gershon Greenberg, (eds), *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses During and After the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), in particular Part 1: 'Ultra-Orthodox Responses during and following the War,' pp. 11–199.
41. Irving Greenberg, 'Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust', in Eva Fleischner (ed.), *Auschwitz, Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Ktav, 1977), pp. 41–2.
42. Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav, 1973); Emil L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought,* 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism,* 2nd edn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
43. Zachary Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
44. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz,* p. 4.
45. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz,* p. 37.
46. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz,* p. 37.
47. Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz*, p. 163.
48. At this point, it should be noted that when speaking of the 'mythic' or 'sacred' in Holocaust memory forms, what is referred to is not synonymous with Peter Novick's understanding of American Holocaust memory as 'civil religion'. Novick argues that the characterization by many American Jews of the devastation of the Holocaust and the victory of the Six Day War as 'redemptive' to be the 'twin pillars' of American Jewish civil religion. Novick also points toward a sacralization of the Holocaust that is occurring de facto, 'in what might be called American "folk Judaism" – less bound by tradition and less scrupulous about theological consistency'. However, his observations, while astute and instructive, remain limited in scope. For example, while he points toward a connection between the 'uniqueness' of the Holocaust and notions 'chosenness' within traditional Jewish theology, his overall approach is not sufficiently grounded in traditional and contemporary understandings of the sacred to give a full account of the meaning and import of this development. See Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), pp. 200–1.
49. Young (ed.), *The Art of Memory,* pp. 19–37.
50. Rabbi Dr H.J. Zimmels, *The Echo of the Nazi Holocaust in Rabbinic Literature* (Jerusalem: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1977), p. 150.
51. Zimmels, *The Echo of the Nazi Holocaust*, p. 151.
52. Zimmels, *The Echo of the Nazi Holocaust*., p. 152.
53. Zimmels, *The Echo of the Nazi Holocaust*. p. 152.
54. Yaffa Eliach, 'Holocaust Memorials: Teaching the Wrong Message? – a Challenge to the Orthodox Community', *Jewish Action,* 54, no. 1 (1993), pp. 66–7.
55. This is not to suggest there are not forms of built Holocaust commemoration in these communities. However, they tend to take the form of commemorative plaques, *yizkhor* 'boards' and other more traditional commemorative forms.

56. Jack Kugelmass, 'Why We Go to Poland', in Young (ed.), *The Art of Memory,* pp. 175–84.
57. Young does mention the influence of the Jewish memorial tradition but does not offer any systematic account of how this tradition becomes embodied (or not) in the memorials under discussion. Young (ed.), *The Art of Memory*, pp. 21–2.
58. An exception could be said to be Young's treatment of Israeli Holocaust memorials, in particular the memorial complex of Yad Vashem. However, Young's explication of the Jewish symbolism and narratives inscribed in the site is predominantly concerned with how these forms come to embody an 'Israeli' approach to Holocaust memorialization, and less their relationship to the Jewish memorial tradition in general. Young, *The Texture of Memory,* see esp. ch. 10, pp. 263–81.
59. Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933–2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 262–72.
60. Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau,* pp. 262–72.
61. Harold Marcuse, 'Holocaust Memorials: The Emergence of a Genre', *American Historical Review,* 115, no. 1 (2010), pp. 53–89.
62. Marcuse, 'Holocaust Memorials: The Emergence of a Genre', pp. 61–2.
63. Marcuse, 'Holocaust Memorials: The Emergence of a Genre', pp. 61–2.
64. Stier, *Committed to Memory*; Oren Baruch Stier, 'Different Trains: Holocaust Artifacts and the Ideologies of Remembrance', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies,* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2005), pp. 81–106.
65. Glucklich's *Holocaust Memory Reframed,* see, in particular, pp. 14–26.
66. Glucklich does engage with selected ancient paradigms such as messianism but tends to relate these to a specific modern manifestation (in this case modern Zionism) rather than seek to understand the impact of the ancient paradigm on the selected site or installation. See pp. 166–73.
67. Daniele Hervieu-Leger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000), p. 42.
68. Hervieu-Leger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory,* p. 53.
69. See, for example, Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
70. See, for example, Kenneth Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998). Discussion as to what, exactly, is sacred about such sites is even more fraught in cases where the place itself was the site of a traumatic event. The ongoing debates as to the nature and content of the memorials planned for the World Trade Center is a case in point. See Josh Nathan-Kazis, 'From Gettysburg to Ground Zero, 'Sacred Space' Debated', *The Forward*, 18 August 2010, accessed 23 August 2010, http://forward.com/articles/130181/.
71. Jay Winter, 'Museums and the Representation of War', *Museum and Society*, November 2012. 10(3) p. 150.
72. Winter, 'Museums and the Representation of War', p. 150.
73. Joan Branham, 'Sacrality and Aura in the Museum: Mute Objects and Articulate Space'. *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, vol. 52/53: p. 39. See also Carol Duncan, 'Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship', in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Levine (eds), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and*

Politics of Museum Displays (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, pp. 88–103.

74. Chris Arthur, 'Exhibiting the Sacred', in Crispin Paine (ed.), *Godly Things: Museums, Objects and Religion* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2000), p. 2.
75. Negative theology provides a case in point.
76. Lawrence E. Sullivan and Alison Edwards (eds), *Stewards of the Sacred* (Washington DC: American Association of Museums in cooperation with the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University, 2005), Introduction, p. x.
77. Sullivan and Edwards (eds), *Stewards of the Sacred*, p. 9.
78. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return,* trans. Willard Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), p. 21. This theme is evident throughout many of Eliade's works, including Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958); *Images and Symbols* (London: Harvell Press, 1961); *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harcourt Trade, 1987).
79. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return,* p. 22. Emphasis added. Eliade here refers to this practice being found in all 'traditional societies' and has been criticized for this generalization, taken by some to be simply a universalization of his observations of Aboriginal dreamtime myths. See G. S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 64. However, his work has had great applicability to the religions of the Ancient Near East and therefore to this study.
80. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return,* p. 4.
81. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, p. 36.
82. The terms 'myth' and 'mythical time' are contested, of course, and their various definitions are largely dependent on discipline and/or context. For the purposes of this work myth should be understood as theological narratives and/or archetypes that seek to imbue history with 'metahistorical' meaning and design. For an introduction to the range of definitions accorded to the term in a variety of disciplines, see Karin R. Andriolo, 'Myth and History: A General Model and Its Application to the Bible', *American Anthropologist,* 83, no. 2 (1981), pp. 261–84.
83. For a full explication of Eliade's formulation of this notion see chapter two of Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*.
84. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return,* , p. 150.
85. Dan Stone, 'Memory, Memorials and Museums', in Dan Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 508.
86. Clearly, the idea of a singular definition for the writing of history in the modern period is a problematic one. The distinction made here is between 'critical history' and 'folk history', with the latter understood as traditional modes of understanding the past.
87. Similar observations concerning the paradox between the increase of knowledge about the past in the modern age and an apparent lack of identification and continuity with that past forms a recurrent theme in much of the 'memory' literature that emerged as a response to Maurice Halbwachs's seminal work, *La Mémoire Collective*. Major works already cited that address this theme include: Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*; Nora, *Realms of Memory*; Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*; Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*.

88. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, 'Book Review, *The Myth of the Eternal Return'*, *Journal of Jewish Studies,* 6, (1995), pp. 172–5.
89. Marc Zvi Brettler, 'Biblical History and Jewish Biblical Theology', *The Journal of Religion,* 77, no. 4 (1997), p. 575.
90. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), pp. 17–18.
91. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 25.
92. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 10.
93. Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 23–4.
94. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, p. xix.
95. Examples of such *midrashim* are too numerous to list. However, Yosef Yerushalmi provides a vivid description of this tendency that encapsulates the rabbinic disregard for chronology, 'In the world of *aggadah* (legend/*midrash*) Adam can instruct his son Seth in Torah, Shem and Eber establish a house of study, the patriarchs institute the three daily prayer services of the normative Jewish liturgy, Og King of Bashan is present at Isaac's circumcision, and Noah prophesies the translation of the Bible into Greek.' Yerushalmi, *Zakhor,* p. 17.
96. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, pp. 16–26.
97. Eliade identifies the Christian 'Fall' with the fall of modern man into 'history and progress' in the final chapter of Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return.*
98. This statement by necessity excludes some rabbinic understandings of 'messianic time' in which historical time could be said to 'collapse'.
99. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor,* p. 25.
100. Josephus, *The Jewish War,* ed. E. Mary Smallwood, trans. G.A. Williamson (London: Penguin Classics, 1984). pp. 275–6.
101. Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot, translation Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse,* p. 48.
102. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion,* pp. 80–6.
103. Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1985), p. 69.
104. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor,* p. 9.
105. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 8.
106. Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 11.
107. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, p. 11.
108. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, p. 20.
109. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, p. 20.
110. David Roskies expresses a similar sentiment when discussing the role of the modern Jewish writer in fusing both modern and pre-modern Jewish concerns: 'all of Jewry is now divided along ideological lines, and each ideology has carved out a different piece of the past. Reform Judaism lays claim to the biblical, archaeological past, the seat of Judeo-Christian heritage. Conservative Judaism lays claim to the early rabbinic period, when the rabbis replaced the prophets and priests. … Modern Orthodoxy lays claim to the Middle Ages, when *Halacha* reigned supreme. … and right wing Orthodoxy lay claim to Jewish Eastern Europe. Reconstructionism

lays claim to modernity, particularly as played out in America. Non-Jewish Jews, meanwhile, who affiliate mostly with universities, lay claim to Freud, Kafka, and Walter Benjamin. … The latest *ism*, feminism, lays claim to a heretofore totally neglected past, the wholesale revision of which is something to behold.' Roskies, *The Jewish Search,* pp. 14–15.

111. Indeed, in 1954 Eliade already offered reason to believe that the 'impulse toward the mythic' – understood as the grafting of metahistorical meaning onto historical events – was not as absent from modern, largely secular societies as one might initially suppose. He wrote: 'The reappearance of cyclical theories in contemporary thought is pregnant with meaning. Incompetent as we are to pass judgement upon their validity, we shall confine ourselves to observing that the formulation, in modern terms, of an archaic myth betrays at least the desire to find a meaning and a transhistorical justification for historical events.' Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return,* p. 147.
112. For a concise overview of the key features of a narrative exhibition approach, see Jeshajahu Weinberg and Rina Elieli, *The Holocaust Museum in Washington* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1995), pp. 50–1.
113. Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Penguin, 1995), pp. 142–3. Beth Hatefutsoth is currently in the midst of a major redevelopment scheduled to open in 2017.
114. Wherever the four-letter Hebrew name of God is used in the biblical text, the English 'equivalent' of YHWH is utilized. It should be noted, however, that this particular name of God is never vocalized in the Jewish tradition and, when chanted liturgically, is replaced with the Hebrew equivalents for 'Lord' or 'The Name'.
115. With regard to these insights I am indebted to the tutelage of Professor Jon Levenson and his astute understanding of the underlying theological shape of biblical narrative.
116. Given their wide-ranging expertise, however, both scholars have considered nearly the gamut of Holocaust representation forms. For an overview of their command of nearly the entire field, see, in particular, Langer, *Using and Abusing* and Young, *At Memory's Edge*.
117. Langer, *Using and Abusing,* p. xi.
118. Young, *At Memory's Edge,* p. 9.
119. David N. Myers, '*Mehabevin Et Ha-Tsarot*: Crusade Memories and Modern Jewish Martyrologies', *Jewish History,* 13, no. 2 (1999), p. 51.
120. Marcuse, 'Holocaust Memorials', p. 60.
121. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse,* p. 262.
122. Harold Bloom, Foreword in Yerushalmi, *Zakhor,* p. xvi.
123. Contemporary examples of the appropriation of the Exodus story are the Black churches in the USA and the liberation theology movement in South America.
124. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 98.
125. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, p. 6.
126. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, 'Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory', *European Journal of Social Theory,*

5, no. 1 (2002), pp. 87–106. For a full explication of these ideas, see Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005).

127. Levy and Sznaider, 'Memory Unbound', p. 88.

2 Negative Epiphany: From Sinai to Washington

1. The original 1993 exhibition only used photography.
2. A review of the major international papers at the time of the liberation reveals the sense of unmitigated horror. For examples, see *The Times* (London, England), Saturday 14 April 1945, p. 4; *The Times* (London, England), Thursday 19 April 1945,p. 4; *The New York Times* (New York, USA), Saturday 28 April 1945, p. 6.
3. The full quotation reads, 'Writers have tried to describe these things but words cannot describe them and, even if they could, there are details too filthy to be printed anywhere. Photographers have sent pictures so horrible that no newspaper normally would use them, but they were less horrible than the reality, for they could not portray the stench of filth and death which clings to one's nostrils for days after one has visited a concentration camp. It is well that the stories be told and retold, however unpleasant they are, and that the photographs be seen by all the world. The world must know and it must not forget.' Harold Denny, *The New York Times Magazine* (New York, USA), Sunday 6 May 1945, p. 8.
4. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), pp. 19–20.
5. See, for example, Tim Cole, 'Nativization and Nationalization: A Comparative Landscape Study of Holocaust Museums in Israel, the US and the UK', 23, no. 1 (2004), pp. 130–45; Grieg Crysler and Abidin Kusno, 'Angels in the Temple: The Aesthetic Construction of Citizenship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum', *Art Journal*, 56, no. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 52–64; Hilene Flanzbaum (ed.), *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); James E. Young, *The Changing Shape of Holocaust Memory* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1995).
6. This contrast is reinforced by other elements placed throughout the building, for example, the display of the flags of the Allied armies in the USHMM's entry hall.
7. Reference to the Holocaust as the 'Event' is evident throughout Wiesel's official correspondence in his role as Chairman of both the Commission and Council, and such language continues to be used to refer to the Holocaust by other key figures such as Michael Berenbaum beyond Wiesel's official tenure.
8. Flanzbaum (ed.), *The Americanization of the Holocaust*. For a critique of 'Americanization', see Peter Novick, 'The American National Narrative of the Holocaust: There Isn't Any', *New German Critique,* no. 90 (Autumn 2003), pp. 27–35.
9. The term 'negative epiphany' does not have a definitive definition but rests upon an understanding that it is the diametric opposite of the understanding of an 'epiphany' as a form of positive, direct and transformative divine revelation. The word originates from the Greek *epiphaneia* 'manifestation'

and refers to a feast of the Church held on 6 January. E. A. Livingstone, 'Epiphany', *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,* 2000, http://www.encyclopedia.com Accessed 6 December 2010. While it is unclear whether Sontag intends to connect her term with its specific, Christian understanding, she is indeed invoking a sense of 'mystery' and 'incomprehensibility' in her use of a theological term to describe a historical event and its documentation in the photographic record.

10. This term is used explicitly by Berenbaum and is taken up and explored in this chapter.
11. The connection between the establishment of the President's Commission and the political concerns of the American Jewish community during the time of the Carter Administration have been well documented. For a summary of these issues, see Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Penguin, 1995), esp. ch. 1, pp. 17–24.
12. For a summary of the history of Holocaust representation in the United States in particular, see Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). For a more recent reappraisal of the emergence of Holocaust memory in the American context and an explicit refutation of Novick's narrative, see Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945–1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
13. Diner, *We Remember*, esp. ch. 1, pp. 18–86.
14. This lack of consensus is evident in the Meeting of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, 15 February 1979, and the 'Opinions Expressed by the Commissioners', 6 February 1979, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
15. Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933–1945* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975).
16. Letter to Dr Irving Greenberg, 24 January 1979, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of Shaike Weinberg, 1979–1995, Box 77. Accession no 1997-014.
17. 'Opinions Expressed by the Commissioners', 6 February 1979, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
18. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, p. 59.
19. Statement of Lucy S. Dawidowicz, President's Commission on the Holocaust, 15 February 1979, p. 6, USHMM Institutional Archives, Shaike Weinberg, 1979-95, Box 47. Accession no 1997-014.
20. Meeting of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, 15 February 1979, p. 3, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
21. Meeting of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, 15 February 1979, pp. 3–4. USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.

22. Meeting of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, 15 February 1979, Staff Summary, p. 10, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
23. *Report to the President, President's Commission on the Holocaust,* 27 September 1979.
24. *Report to the President*, p. 9.
25. Proceedings: President's Commission on the Holocaust, February 15, 1979, Opening Statement, p. 3, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
26. Proceedings: President's Commission on the Holocaust, February 15, 1979, Opening Statement, pp. 1–2. USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
27. It is debatable whether Wiesel would accept the term 'activist' to describe his political interests and actions. However, for example, his work on the campaign for Soviet Jewry and other causes as well as his political leverage of Holocaust memory with regard to US foreign policy, most notably in the Bosnian conflict, provide examples of what one might label political activism. See Mark Chmiel, 'The Political Varieties of Sacred Remembrance: Elie Wiesel and United States Foreign Policy', *Journal of Church and State,* 40, no. 4 (1998), pp. 827–52. In 1986, Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
28. The Council was the body established immediately after the Commission's findings were presented to Congress and charged with the development of what eventually became the USHMM. The USHMC remains the institution's governing body to this day.
29. Minutes of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council 4 December 1986, American Jewish Archives, MSS collection 712, Box 7/28.
30. Proceedings: President's Commission on the Holocaust, February 15, 1979, Opening Statement, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
31. Much has been written on Wiesel's notion of 'silence' as the only possible response to the theological impasse of the Holocaust. While his thought recalls similar theological ideas, such as Arthur Cohen's idea of the Holocaust as *tremendum,* (a term connected to Rudolf Otto's definition of 'holiness' as *mysterium tremendum* – fearful mystery), it is perhaps distinguished by his focus on retaining the idea of 'the question' as the orienting axis of his theological response to the Holocaust. As John K. Roth writes of this proclivity, 'So hope [for Wiesel] cannot be located in God, at any rate not simply, for the double reason that God is more question than answer. On the one hand, he refuses to render an accounting to us – either because he cannot or because he will not. On the other, to be Jewish – also Christian and human in the best senses – is to hear that silence shoot back the questions put to God: What are you doing? Are you choosing life or death?', Roth, *A Consuming Fire,* p. 122.
32. Robert Alter, 'Deformations of the Holocaust', *Commentary,* February, no. 2 (1981), pp. 50–1. For a full listing of Commissioners, Professional staff and advisors to the Commission, see 'Staff Summary: Meeting of the President's Commission on the Holocaust' 15 February 1979, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
33. Alter, 'Deformations of the Holocaust', p. 50.

34. Alter, 'Deformations of the Holocaust', p. 50.
35. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* p. 22.
36. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*. See, in particular, the Introduction for a concise description of this ongoing issue, pp. 3–5.
37. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, pp. 17–52.
38. Dr Gottschalk, Notes on first session of Commission, 15 February 1979, American Jewish Archives, MSS collection 712, Box 1/28. In his handwritten notes Gottschalk refers to this formulation as constituting a 'holy moment'.
39. *Report to the President, President's Commission on the Holocaust,* 27 September 1979, p. i.
40. For a full review of this debate in the historiography, see Gavriel Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies,* 13, no. 1 (1999), pp. 28–61. For a succinct account of its potential pitfalls, see David Biale, 'The Perils of Uniqueness: The Holocaust in Historical Context, Vol. 1 by Steven Katz', *Tikkun,* 10, no. 1 (1995), pp. 79–84.
41. *Report to the President,* pp. 3–8.
42. *Report to the President,* p. 4.
43. *Report to the President*, p. 8.
44. Elie Wiesel, *And the Sea is Never Full: Memoirs, 1969-* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999). See, in particular, pp. 248–9.
45. 'Founders' tapes, Interview with Michael Berenbaum, USHMM Institutional Archives, Box 4 Accession no 2000.035, 2 March 2000, pp. 100–1.
46. Michael Berenbaum, *Elie Wiesel: God, the Holocaust, and the Children of Israel* (Springfield: Behrman House Publishing, 1994), p. 20.
47. Interview with Michael Berenbaum, 3 May 2009. Berenbaum expands on this notion describing Wiesel's influence as 'charismatic', contingent on 'influence of person, not influence of office.'
48. Steven Schwarzschild, 'Jewish Values in a Post-Holocaust Future', *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought,* 16, no. 3 (1967), p. 157.
49. The clearest opposing example is found in the writings of Italian Jewish survivor Primo Levi, whose work sits within the humanist, scientific tradition rather than the Jewish.
50. See Berenbaum, *Elie Wiesel* and Steven T. Katz and Alan Rosen (eds), *Elie Wiesel: Jewish, Literary, and Moral Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013) for a full explication of how Jewish tradition informs Wiesel's writings and for a Christian perspective, see Roth, *A Consuming Fire*.
51. Mordechi and Haman, archetypical characters of good and evil respectively, are found in the Scroll of Esther. The Scroll is read on the holiday of Purim and celebrates the salvation of the Jews from a proposed genocide in Persia in the fifth century BCE.
52. Dr. Alfred Gottschalk, 'Memo on Elie Wiesel', American Jewish Archives, MSS collection 712, Box 1/28.
53. Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); David Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989).
54. Jacqueline Ninio, *Out of the Depths I Cry Out to You: Liturgical and Ritual Response to Jewish Communal Catastrophe* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Rabbinical thesis, 1998).
55. Berenbaum, *Elie Wiesel,* p. 43.

56. Berenbaum, *Elie Wiesel,* pp. 42–3.
57. Elie Wiesel, 'Presentation of the Report of the President's Commission on the Holocaust to the President of the United States', The Rose Garden, The White House, Washington, DC, 27 September 1979, American Jewish Archives MSS collection 712, Box 1/28.
58. For further reading on the T4 operations, see Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), Götz Aly, Peter Chroust and Christian Pross, *Cleansing the Fatherland: Nazi Medicine and Racial Hygiene* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) and Michael S. Bryant, *Confronting the 'Good Death': Nazi Euthanasia on Trial, 1945–1953* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005).
59. 'Founders' tapes, Interview with Michael Berenbaum, p. 18, USHMM Institutional Archives, Box 4, Accession no 2000.035, 2 March 2000.
60. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Design Concept Proposal, 31 January 1986 p. 7, American Jewish Archives MSS collection 712, Box 6/28. Emphasis added.
61. Elie Wiesel, *All Rivers Run to the Sea: Memoirs Volume One 1928–1969* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), p. 104.
62. Ibid., p. 105.
63. Ibid., p. 4.
64. Wiesel, *And the Sea is Never Full,* p. 195.
65. Berenbaum contends that he was dismissed on the grounds of being too 'assimilationist'. Interview with Michael Berenbaum, 3 May 2009. See also Michael Hiltzick, 'Michael Berenbaum works to make sure the world remembers the Holocaust', *LA Times*, 22 August 2010, http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-hiltzik-20100822,0,1228880.column, accessed 18 September 2010.
66. Interview with Michael Berenbaum, 3 May 2009.
67. Interview with Michael Berenbaum. 3 May 2009.
68. Interview with Michael Berenbaum, 3 May 2009.
69. For a full account of Berenbaum's concept of the Holocaust as 'unique and universal', see Michael Berenbaum, *After Tragedy and Triumph: Essays in Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), esp. ch. 2.
70. Interview with Michael Berenbaum, 3 May 2009.
71. Joseph Soloveitchik, *Fate and Destiny: From Holocaust to the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: Ktav Publishing House, 2000).
72. Interview with Michael Berenbaum, 3 May 2009.
73. For example, the use of the Exodus story as a story of universal liberation is evident in its treatment in the theological traditions of both the Black Church and in Liberation theology.
74. This tendency is perhaps most clearly evident in the modern period in the proliferation of Passover *haggadot* that are focused on particular themes that find resonance in the Exodus story e.g. Feminist *Haggadot*. Another example of the modern tendency to utilize the story to more universalistic ends is Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).
75. *Report to the President*, p. 9.
76. USHMM website, Mission Statement, accessed 13 July 2009.

77. *Report to the President,* Appendix C, p. 26.
78. Jon D. Levenson, 'The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism', in Mark G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 143.
79. Levenson also makes the point that the distinction between Israel and 'the nations' is not conceived either in the biblical or rabbinic context as a simple dichotomy of 'good and bad'. In fact, there is explicit reference in both biblical (e.g. Amos 3:2) and rabbinic texts that the 'choice' of Israel does not in any way inevitably indicate superiority but, if anything, its opposite. Levenson, 'The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism', pp. 158–9.
80. Levenson, 'The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism', p. 145.
81. Levenson, 'The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism', p. 168.
82. Proceedings: President's Commission on the Holocaust, February 15, 1979, Closing Statement, p. 1. USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
83. Proceedings: President's Commission on the Holocaust, February 15, 1979, Closing Statement, p. 3. USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
84. Interview with Michael Berenbaum, 3 May 2009.
85. Nor is the author casting any aspersions on either Berenbaum or Wiesel's commitment to normative Judaism or *halacha*.
86. Weinberg and Elieli, *The Holocaust Museum in Washington,* p. 25.
87. Raul Hilberg, 'Opening Remarks: The Discovery of the Holocaust', in Peter Hayes (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies,* vol. 1 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), p. 19.
88. Weinberg and Elieli, *The Holocaust Museum in Washington,* p. 19.
89. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* pp. 72–84.
90. Minutes of the USHMM Council meeting 26 January 1981, including 'Theme for the Holocaust Museum/Memorial', American Jewish Archives MSS collection 712, Box 3/28.
91. Weinberg and Elieli, *The Holocaust Museum in Washington,* p. 18.
92. Weinberg and Elieli, *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*, p. 26. Emphasis added.
93. Weinberg and Elieli, *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*, p. 26.
94. Jennifer L. Koosed, 'Written in Stone: Biblical Quotation in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum', in Tod Linafelt (ed.), *Strange Fire: Reading the Bible after the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 164–5.
95. Koosed, 'Written in Stone', p. 166.
96. Two well-known examples are Elie Wiesel's much-publicized exhortation to then President Bill Clinton to intervene in the Bosnian conflict and the critical stance within the museum display regarding the failure of the Allies to bomb the death camps.
97. Koosed, 'Written in Stone', p. 169.
98. The idiom for martyrdom in the Jewish tradition.
99. *Report to the President,* p. 9.
100. Weinberg and Elieli, *The Holocaust Museum in Washington*, p. 49.
101. Amy Sodaro, 'Whose Holocaust? The Struggle for Romany Inclusion in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum', *The Journal of the Inclusive Museum,* 1, no. 4 (2008), pp. 27–35.

102. Sodaro, 'Whose Holocaust?', p. 28.
103. Sodaro, 'Whose Holocaust?', pp. 33–4.
104. Sodaro, 'Whose Holocaust?', pp. 32–3. See also Linenthal, *Preserving Memory,* p. 54.
105. It should be noted that many of the USHMM's temporary exhibitions, as well as their extensive website, can be understood as attempts to rectify this imbalance. For example, in recent years, the USHMM has developed temporary and travelling exhibitions on medical experimentation and homosexual victims. However, the permanent exhibition remains largely unchanged from its original form.
106. Sodaro, 'Whose Holocaust?', p. 33.
107. Copies of this model are also utilized in the Imperial War Museum display and the new Historical Museum at Yad Vashem. The different 'framing' that each museum gives to the diorama is significant as it deeply influences the meaning attributed to this now iconic death camp. See chapter 3 for assessment of the new Historical Museum's treatment of this model.
108. Many disagreed with Freed on this point, and the debate as to whether to darken the space is ongoing. Interview with Michael Berenbaum, 3 May 2009.
109. Minutes of the USHMM Council meeting 26 January 1981, including 'Theme for the Holocaust Museum/Memorial', American Jewish Archives MSS collection 712, Box 3/28.
110. Minutes of the USHMM Council meeting 26 January 1981, including 'Theme for the Holocaust Museum/Memorial', American Jewish Archives MSS collection 712, Box 3/28.
111. Letter from Laszlo N. Tauber to the Honorable Professor Elie Wiesel, 29 May 1984, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
112. Ceremony for the Symbolic Ground Breaking and unveiling of the Museum Marker on Monday 30 April1984 at the site of the USHMM, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
113. Letter from Dr Laszlo Tauber to Professor Elie Wiesel, 10 September 1986, USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
114. For example, see Letter from Benjamin Meed to Dr Laszlo Tauber, 21 December 1984. USHMM Institutional Archives, Records of the Chairman – Elie Wiesel, 1978–86, Box 17. Accession no 1997-013.
115. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, p. 94.
116. Description of Hall of Remembrance in US Holocaust Memorial Council 'News', 22 May 1987 (part of 'Building Design Fact Sheet'), American Jewish Archives MSS collection 712, Box 7/28.
117. Brendan Gill, 'The Holocaust Museum: An Unquiet Sanctuary', *The New Yorker,* 19 April 1993, p. 107.
118. http://www.ushmm.org/museum/a_and_a/inside2/ accessed 17 July 2009.
119. http://www.ushmm.org/museum/a_and_a/inside2/ accessed 17 July 2009.
120. All quotations in this section are transcribed directly from the USHMM display.
121. The full extent of the institution's activities and reach is evident in the scope of its website: www.ushmm.org.

122. Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). See esp. part three, 'Postmodernism, or "The Year of the Holocaust"', pp. 187–274.
123. Diner, *We Remember*, p. 4.
124. Diner, *We Remember,* p. 139.
125. Diner, *We Remember*, pp. 138–45.
126. Diner, *We Remember*, p. 139.
127. Diner, *We Remember*, p. 366.
128. Letter from Benjamin Meed to Harvey Meyerhoff, 25 February 1992, AJA MSS collection 712, Box 1.
129. Letter from Rabbi Dr Alfred Gottshalk to Harvey Meyerhoff, 14 February 1992, AJA MSS collection 712, Box 11.
130. Jonathan Rosen, 'The Misguided Holocaust Museum', *New York Times*, 18 April 1993, p. E19.

3 From Tent to Temple: Resurrection in Jerusalem

1. Bella Gutterman and Avner Shalev, *To Bear Witness: Holocaust Remembrance at Yad Vashem* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008), p. 17.
2. The development of the theology of resurrection in the *Tenach* is nascent and it is more likely that Ezekiel's vision is one of national restoration rather than a fully developed vision of a general resurrection found in late second Temple and rabbinic literature. However, the central point is that it is the restoration of the nation is common factor in both visions. For a full exposition of the development of the theology of resurrection in biblical, rabbinic and modern Jewish thought, see Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), esp. ch. 10, pp. 156–65.
3. Gutterman and Shalev, *To Bear Witness,* pp. 16–17.
4. Documented records pertaining to the development of the new Historical Museum are not available for public viewing for thirty years after the project's completion (2035). Due to this limitation, the following analysis has relied upon oral interviews undertaken with key members of the historical and curatorial team, alongside a close reading of the space itself. Since Yad Vashem's historians expressly requested to not be identified by name, when material from such interviews is utilized, reference is made to all historians interviewed. These primary sources are supplemented with published secondary sources that have become available since the opening of the new Historical Museum in 2005.
5. Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p. 421.
6. The Hebrew term *Shoah* is most commonly translated as 'catastrophe'. As it is the dominant term utilized at Yad Vashem to describe the genocide of European Jewry, it is used interchangeably with the word Holocaust in this chapter.
7. For a full description of both the relief and the entirety of the old museum complex, see James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 251–60.

8. Interview with Yad Vashem historians, 30 April 2014.
9. During the period of the Holocaust, the concept of *Kiddush HaShem* (Sanctification of the Name – martyrdom) was both challenged and complemented by the emergence of the idea of *Kiddush HaHayim* (Sanctification of Life). For and introduction to this concept, see Yisrael Gutman, '*Kiddush ha-Shem* and *Kiddush ha-Hayim*' in Alex Grobman (ed.), *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, vol. 1 (Chappaqua: Rossel Books, 1984) pp. 185–202; and Joseph Rudavsky, *To Live with Hope, to Die with Dignity: Spiritual Resistance in the Ghettos and Camps* (Lanham: Jason Aronson, 1997).
10. Young, *The Texture of Memory,* see esp. ch. 10, pp. 263–81.
11. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, p. 269.
12. This view was affirmed in interviews with Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010. Also see Mooli (Shmiel) Brog, 'In Blessed Memory of a Dream: Mordechi Shenhavi and Initial Holocaust Commemoration Ideas in Palestine, 1942–1945', *Yad Vashem Studies,* 30 (2002), pp. 297–336. Many of the founders were members of secular Zionist youth groups. Some, like Shenhavi, migrated to Israel prior to the Second World War; others were members of resistance groups who managed to survive the Holocaust.
13. The Jewish settlement in British Mandate Palestine.
14. Shmuel Spector, 'Yad Vashem,' in Israel Gutman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990), vol. 4, 1681–6.
15. Migration to Israel. Literally, 'to ascend'.
16. For further information on Shenhavi's life and activities, see David Zayit, *Visions in Action: Life Story of Mordechi Shenhabi* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 2006.
17. Brog, 'In Blessed Memory of a Dream', pp. 303–8.
18. Brog, 'In Blessed Memory of a Dream', p. 301.
19. The national council and internal governing body of the Jewish community in mandate Palestine.
20. Brog, 'In Blessed Memory of a Dream', p. 303. Emphasis added.
21. Stephanie Shosh Rotem, *Constructing Memory: Architectural Narratives of Holocaust Museums* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 31–9.
22. Shosh Rotem, *Constructing Memory*, p. 32.
23. Brog, 'In Blessed Memory of a Dream', p. 309.
24. Brog, 'In Blessed Memory of a Dream'.
25. Brog, 'In Blessed Memory of a Dream'.
26. Shenhavi's preferred sites were the Jezreel Valley or the area surrounding Kibbutz Ein HaShofet. See Rotem, *Constructing Memory,* p. 32.
27. Gutterman and Shalev, *To Bear Witness,* pp. 11–22.
28. Moshe Safdie, *Yad Vashem: Moshe Safdie – the Architecture of Memory* (Geneva: Lars Mueller Publishers, 2005), pp. 62–3.
29. I thank Dr Jason Kalman for sharing this insight with me during my fellowship at the American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati. For a full exposition of the intricacies of Temple building in the Ancient Near East, see Victor (Avigdor) Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).
30. Dahlia Ofer, 'The Strength of Remembrance: Commemoration of the Holocaust During the First Decade of Israel', *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture and Society* 6, no. 2 (2000), pp. 24–55.

31. Ofer, 'The Strength of Remembrance', pp. 39–40.
32. Ofer, 'The Strength of Remembrance', p. 42.
33. Ofer, 'The Strength of Remembrance', pp. 47–9.
34. Dahlia Ofer, 'Victims, Fighters, Survivors: A Challenge to Israeli Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness' (Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, 2010), p. 3.
35. Yaacov Shelhav, 'The Holocaust in the Consciousness of Our Generation', *Yad Vashem Bulletin,* July 1958, p. 2.
36. It is of note that Shelhav's article was written prior to the Eichmann trial which brought the Holocaust and, in particular, the testimony of survivors into popular Israeli consciousness.
37. Yaacov Shelhav, 'The Holocaust in the Consciousness of Our Generation', p. 2. On the development of a more sympathetic public perception of survivors in Israel due largely to the events of the Eichmann trial, see Hanna Yablonka, 'The Development of Holocaust Consciousness in Israel: The Nuremberg, Kapos, Kastner and Eichmann Trials', *Israel Studies* 8, no. 3 (2003), pp. 16–20.
38. Arieh Leon Kubovy, 'The "Day of Remembrance" Law', *Yad Vashem Bulletin,* October 1959, p. 2.
39. Arieh Leon Kubovy, 'A Day of Examination of Conscience', *Yad Vashem Bulletin,* June 1960, p. 2. Emphasis added.
40. Kubovy, 'A Day of Examination of Conscience', p. 2.
41. This observation is based on a review of the contents of the first ten editions of the *Yad Vashem Bulletin* dated from 1957 to 1961.
42. Arieh Leon Kubovy, 'Opening Address at the Third Session of the Fifth Council', *Yad Vashem Bulletin,* March 1961, p. 49. No doubt Kubovy's concerns were of a financial as well as political nature as funding was also a factor in Yad Vashem's inability to fulfil all the tasks it set itself in its early years.
43. This is particularly evident in editions of the *Bulletin* published in the planning and lead up to the opening of the new Historical Museum.
44. Indeed, a special section noting the support of international benefactors is included in each *Bulletin*.
45. See Segev, *The Seventh Million,* esp. Part V, pp. 255–322.
46. Interviews undertaken with Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010.
47. Interviews undertaken with Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010.
48. Interestingly, in her critique of the new Historical Museum Ofer does not challenge this notion. She accepts the curator's explanation of a 'Jewish perspective' largely at face value and does not attempt to ask what such a Jewish perspective might entail and exclude. See Ofer, 'Victims, Fighters, Survivors', pp. 20–4.
49. Ofer, 'Victims, Fighters, Survivors', pp. 20–4.
50. Ofer, 'Victims, Fighters, Survivors', pp. 20–4.
51. While it is tempting to read the latter as a redundancy, the implications of 'Remember' and 'Do not forget' in biblical Hebrew are not simply repetitions. Rather, the former should be understood as a call to action, the latter as a precursor to a 'virtual death'. See Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) and Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989) for further explication of these ideas.

52. That said, the concern with the morality (or not) of the decree does not seem to have been the overriding concern for earlier commentators—either Jewish or Christian. For these commentators, it was Moses' actions in the battle (the raising of his hands) that caused the most consternation. For early Jewish commentators, there was a need to address whether some kind of 'sorcery' was at play, while for early Christian commentators a major preoccupation was whether this incident prefigured the Cross. For a summary of early responses, see James Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), pp. 234–6.
53. Plato, *Euthyphro* 9e.
54. Avi Sagi, 'The Punishment of Amalek in the Jewish Tradition: Coping with the Moral Problem', *The Harvard Theological Review* 87, no. 3 (1994), p. 327.
55. Sagi, 'The Punishment of Amalek', p. 324.
56. It is important to note that the concept of DCM (Divine Command Morality) is a contested topic in both ancient and modern Jewish exegesis. The topic is debated at length in Michael J. Harris and Eugene Korn, 'On Divine Command Morality: Divine Commands, Morality and Jewish Tradition: A Response to Eugene Korn and Reply to Michael J. Harris', *Meorot: A Forum of Modern Orthodox Discourse*, 6, no. 1 (2006), pp. 1–16.
57. Sagi, 'The Punishment of Amalek', p. 325.
58. Sagi, 'The Punishment of Amalek', p. 325.
59. Abrabanel, Commentary on the Torah, Deuteronomy 25:17.
60. Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Deuteronomy 25:17.
61. Sagi, 'The Punishment of Amalek', p. 326.
62. Sagi, 'The Punishment of Amalek', p. 327.
63. Sagi, 'The Punishment of Amalek', p. 30.
64. Sagi, 'The Punishment of Amalek', p. 32.
65. This point is not meant to imply either implicitly or explicitly that the Jews of Europe were in some way responsible for the evils of Nazism. Rather, this discussion of the symbolic resonance of the Amalek story pertains to its influence in the present instrumentalization of Holocaust memory. See, for example, Jeffrey Goldberg, 'Israel's Fears, Amalek's Arsenal', *New York Times,* 17 May 2009.
66. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1974), pp. 340–1.
67. Gutterman and Shalev, *To Bear Witness,* p. 7.
68. For example, a powerful closing exhibit in which fragments of texts from both victims, survivors, philosophers and other commentators concerning the Holocaust is intimately linked to an understanding of the Jewish people as 'People of the Book' and speaks to the revered and sacred status of text in the Jewish tradition. Indeed, commentators such as David Roskies, Naomi Siedman and Zoe Waxman have drawn attention to an emerging understanding of survivor testimony in particular as comprising a 'New Scripture'. See David Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006); Zoe Waxman, 'Testimonies as Sacred Texts: The Sanctification of Holocaust Writing', *Past and Present,* 206, no. 5 (2010), pp. 321–41.
69. Babylonian Talmud, *Kiddushin*, 49:2.

70. Elie Wiesel, 'Remembering' in Safdie, *The Architecture of Memory*, p. 126.
71. Interviews undertaken with Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010. The brief is not yet available for public access, however, a sense of the original brief can be gleaned in the overviews found in Dorit Harel, *Facts and Feelings: Dilemmas in Designing the Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010), pp. 16–19.
72. Leah Goldstein, 'A View to Memory: The New Holocaust History Museum', *Yad Vashem Magazine* 2004.
73. Safdie, *The Architecture of Memory,* p. 99.
74. Shosh Rotem, *Constructing Memory,* p. 62.
75. Shosh Rotem, *Constructing Memory,* p. 62.
76. Joan Ockman, 'A Place in the World for a World Displaced', in ibid., p. 21.
77. Mooli (Shmuel) Brog noted the similarities between Har HaZikaron, upon which Yad Vashem stands and the Temple Mount even in the institution's early years. See Mooli (Shmuel) Brog, 'Landscapes of Memory and National Identity: The Holocaust Commemoration at Yad Vashem' (Hebrew University, 2006), pp. 108–14.
78. Interviews undertaken with members of the Yad Vashem curatorial team, 11 January 2010.
79. Ockman in Safdie, *The Architecture of Memory,* p. 23.
80. Interviews undertaken Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010.
81. Hillel Halkin, 'Memory and Redemption Coexist as Yad Vashem Expands', *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* 6 October 2000, p. B16.
82. The film is actually a compilation of photos and moving footage and as such moves in the opposite direction of most films – the action proceeds from right to left across the triangular backdrop.
83. Interviews undertaken with Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010.
84. Interviews undertaken with Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010.
85. Interviews undertaken with Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010.
86. The ghettos are also treated somewhat thematically, with the major ghettos and the differences between them a focal point of the display.
87. Interviews undertaken with Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010.
88. Interviews undertaken with Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010.
89. Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1967).
90. All exhibition quotations were transcribed from the NHM display.
91. NHM display.
92. NHM display.
93. NHM display.
94. I am indebted to Mariela Sztrum for her keen insight as to the *midrashic* nature of this caption.
95. Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah,* 18a.
96. Interviews undertaken with Yad Vashem historians, 4 January 2010 and 30 April 2014.
97. Gutterman and Shalev, *To Bear Witness,* p. 7.
98. Gutterman and Shalev, *To Bear Witness,* p. 7.
99. http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/statistics.asp. Accessed 17 October 2010.
100. NHM display.

101. NHM display.
102. NHM display.
103. NHM display.
104. The choice to frame the prosecution in this manner was famously criticized by Hannah Arendt in her coverage of the trials for the *New Yorker* magazine. These reports were later compiled in the book, Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963).
105. Interviews undertaken Yad Vashem historians, 4–10 January 2010.
106. Safdie, *The Architecture of Memory,* p. 98.
107. This initiative has now been enlarged through the use of an online forum in which relatives can submit 'Pages of Testimony' to record victim's names.
108. Safdie, *The Architecture of Memory*, p. 99.
109. Yad Vashem visitors' book, January 2010.
110. While the prevalence of Holocaust memory has grown in the past three decades in Israel, recent research has clearly demonstrated that the Holocaust was a topic for both public and private debate from the *Yishuv* period and from as early as 1942. For a recent and comprehensive survey of the place of the Holocaust in Israeli life and consciousness see: the special edition of *Israel Studies,* 14, no. 1 (2009).
111. The instances of newspaper articles and op-eds invoking or discussing the memory of the Holocaust are too numerous to list in any meaningful fashion. A keyword search of any of the major Israeli newspapers online provides clear evidence of the abundance of such material. Much of this material is focussed in particular on the intersection between Holocaust memory and the Israel–Palestinian conflict. For a considered and scholarly discussion of the connection between the memory of the Holocaust and the conflict, see Leonard Grob and John K. Roth, *Anguished Hope: Holocaust Scholars Confront the Palestinian–Israeli Conflict* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008).
112. Tuvia Frilling, 'Introduction', *Israel Studies,* 14, no. 1 (2009), p. 12.
113. For a concise effort at such a survey, see Dalia Ofer, 'The Past That Does Not Pass: Israelis and Holocaust Memory', in ibid., pp. 1–35.
114. Daniel Gutwein, 'The Privatization of the Holocaust: Memory, Historiography and Politics', in ibid., p. 36.
115. Gutwein, 'The Privatization of the Holocaust', p. 37.
116. While it is not possible to fully assess the impact of these conflicts within the parameters of the present study for an attempt at such an analysis, see Ofer, 'Victims, Fighters, Survivors', pp. 28–35.
117. The 'New Historians' include scholars such as philosopher Adi Ophir, Moshe Zuckerman, Idit Zertal, Esther Benbassa and former MK and Speaker of the Knesset Avraham Burg. 'Old Historians' include Yehuda Bauer, Dan Michman, and philosopher Elhanan Yakira.
118. Dina Porat, *The Blue and Yellow Star of David: The Zionist Leadership in Palestine and the Holocaust, 1939–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).
119. Segev, *The Seventh Million,* p. 18.
120. See, for example, Tuvia Frilling, 'The New Historians and the Failure of Rescue Operations During the Holocaust', *Israel Studies*, 8, no. 3 (2003), pp. 32–7.

121. Yechiam Weitz, 'Dialectical versus Unequivocal: Israeli Historiography's Treatment of the *Yishuv* and Zionist Movement Attitudes toward the Holocaust', in Benny Morris, *Making Israel* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), p. 285.
122. Segev, *The Seventh Million,* p. 429.
123. Gutwein, 'The Privatization of the Holocaust', p. 37.
124. Weitz, 'Dialectical versus Unequivocal', p. 286.
125. Gutwein, 'The Privatization of the Holocaust', p. 39.
126. 'Israelis and the Holocaust: How to Remember and How Not to Forget', *Politika,* 8 (1986).
127. Gutwein, 'The Privatization of the Holocaust', p. 40.
128. Avraham Burg, *The Holocaust is Over: We Must Rise from its Ashes* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 171–3.
129. Burg, *The Holocaust is Over,* p. 171.
130. Ofer, 'The Past That Does Not Pass', p. 25.
131. http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/mission_statement.asp. Accessed 28 November 2014.
132. Remarks by David Shimoni, 12 July 1942, quoted in Brog, 'In Blessed Memory of a Dream', p. 333.

4 A Redeemer Cometh: The Survivor in the Space

1. Marika Weinberger, *Surviving Survival: A Selection of Speeches* (Sydney: Sydney Jewish Museum Community Stories, 2008), pp. 30–1.
2. Weinberger, *Surviving Survival,* pp. 30–1.
3. These excerpts come from the full quotation: 'The voice of the survivor is the authentic voice of the Holocaust. It speaks for the living and the dead.' Yaffa Eliach (Inscribed in the Sydney Jewish Museum's Sanctum of Remembrance).
4. This view was affirmed in an interview with Professor Konrad Kwiet on 2 December 2009. Professor Kwiet has served as the Resident Historian of the Sydney Jewish Museum since its inception.
5. Sylvia Deutsch, 'The Holocaust is Unique', *Australian Jewish News,* 23 July 1993, p. 10.
6. Deutsch, 'The Holocaust is Unique', p. 10.
7. Sylvia Rosenblum, 'Are Museums the Best Place for the Memorialization of the Holocaust?', *International Network on Holocaust and Genocide* 11, no. 4 (1996), p. 17.
8. Rosenblum, 'Are Museums the Best Place', p. 17.
9. Unlike the majority of Holocaust museums internationally, the Sydney Jewish Museum began as an entirely private venture and remains so today, with the majority of operating costs sourced from within the Jewish community. Government grants are applied for and obtained for distinct projects, but there is no ongoing source of government funding. The effects of this private financial backing are explored further along in the chapter.
10. The definition of the historical enterprise attributed to the German historian Leopold Von Ranke; 'to show what actually happened'.
11. These developments are discussed in detail further on in this chapter.

12. The author worked as the Sydney Jewish Museum's Education Director and Project Director/Curator for its *Culture and Continuity* exhibition from 2002 to 2011. She is currently the lead consulting curator for the redevelopment of its Holocaust permanent exhibition as well as the lead researcher for the planned 'Holocaust and Human Rights' section. While these roles allow her 'insider' knowledge of and participation in these developments and the debates surrounding their evolution, the views and interpretations expressed here are the author's own and do not represent those of the SJM.
13. While this study concentrates on the Sydney Jewish Museum, this observation is also true of the development of the Melbourne Holocaust Centre.
14. Emil L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 14.
15. See W.D. Rubinstein, 'The Evolution of Post-War Australian Jewry: The Non-Universalistic Community' in Hilary Rubenstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History,* vol. 2 (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1991), p. 30, and Judith E. Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance in Australian Jewish Communities, 1945–2000* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2001), p. 11.
16. While the SJM exhibition was finally placed in a pre-existing communal building, the Maccabean Hall (to be discussed in the following section), at this point there was no consensus as to where the display would be housed or whether a totally new building would need to be established.
17. *A Proposal for the Establishment of a Jewish Holocaust Museum in Sydney*, 1986, p. 1. Sydney Jewish Museum Institutional Archives.
18. *A Proposal*, p. 2.
19. *A Proposal*, p. 2.
20. *A Proposal*, p. 3.
21. The current collecting policy of the SJM explicitly prohibits the buying of Nazi paraphernalia for fear of participating in a black market of such items. However, it is asserted in the *Proposal*, Section B. 'Collections Policy' that 'objects for the permanent collection will be acquired by gift, bequest, purchase, exchange or any other transaction…' *A Proposal*, p. 11.
22. Such a partnership is exemplified in the USHMM structure.
23. Suzanne D. Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (Sydney: Brandl & Schlesinger, 1997), pp. 369–71.
24. *A Proposal,* p. 2.
25. ANZAC is the acronym for 'Australian New Zealand Army Corps', but is commonly understood to embody the heroic struggles of Australian and NZ soldiers most particularly in the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign of the First World War. The 'Anzac Spirit' is a populist, folk idea that survived beyond the immediate context of the First World War and has continued to influence how Australians perceive their military history. Most often this idea is associated with concepts such as 'mateship', self-sacrifice and radical egalitarianism in opposition to the British fixation with class difference and a certain 'jokester' characteristic of the Australian soldier most commonly referred to as 'larrikinism'.
26. Gael Hammer, *Sydney Jewish Museum Catalogue* (Sydney: Sydney Jewish Museum, 1992).
27. *A Proposal*, p. 2.

28. *A Proposal*, p. 6.
29. *A Proposal*, p. 6.
30. Sections of the following account of the SJM's history can also be found in Avril Alba, 'Displaying the Sacred: Australian Holocaust Memorials in Public Life', *Holocaust Studies: a Journal of Culture and History*, 2007, 13(2–3), pp. 151–72 and Avril Alba, 'Set in Stone? The Intergenerational and Institutional Transmission of Holocaust Memory', in Nigel Eltringham and Pam Maclean (eds), *Remembering Genocide*, (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 92–111.
31. The per capita rate of Jewish participation in both the First and Second World Wars was higher than that of the general population.
32. Hammer, *Sydney Jewish Museum Catalogue,* p. 7.
33. For a summary of the rise of popular Holocaust consciousness in Australia, see Berman, *Holocaust Remembrance in Australian Jewish Communities, 1945–2000*.
34. Hammer, *Sydney Jewish Museum Catalogue,* p. 7.
35. Cf. Avril Alba, 'Displaying the Sacred: Australian Holocaust Memorials in Public Life', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History,* 13, nos. 2–3 (2007), pp. 151–72.
36. *A Proposal,* p. 18.
37. Interview with Marika Weinberger, 11 October 2009.
38. Hammer, *Sydney Jewish Museum Catalogue,* p. 7.
39. Since 1992, extra permanent and temporary exhibition space has been created from which the central Star void is not visible.
40. Confirmed by Konrad Kwiet and Marika Weinberger in separate interviews undertaken in October and December 2009.
41. The most recent commemorative use of the Star was for the Reading of Names ceremony held annually in the lead up to the High Holy Days.
42. Ground Floor Refurbishment Advisory Committee Minutes, SJM Institutional Archives, 2007–08, *An Obligation to Remember*: *Exhibition Concept Development Plan* (Sydney Jewish Museum, 2014) and *A Master Plan for the Redevelopment of the Sydney Jewish Museum* (Sydney Jewish Museum, 2013).
43. There are, however, archival photographs of Nazi rallies held in Nuremberg.
44. Interview with Professor Konrad Kwiet, 2 December 2009.
45. Resistance was also part of the original display but is currently being redeveloped and will open to the public in April 2011.
46. See Weinberger, *Surviving Survival,* p. 74. Evidence of such sentiments is also found in many of the interviews with Sydney survivors undertaken by the Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. The SJM houses the VHA interviews of Sydney survivors.
47. See Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora,* pp. 141–224.
48. Interview with Marika Weinberger, 11 October 2009.
49. Interview with Marika Weinberger, 11 October 2009.
50. COM minutes, 11 June 1993, point 6, SJM Institutional Archives.
51. Interview with Marika Weinberger, 11 October 2009.
52. Interview with Marika Weinberger, 11 October 2009.
53. The trials took place in Adelaide, South Australia in 1990–93 after a nearly decade-long investigation of war criminals in Australia by the federal government's Special Investigation Unit.
54. Interview with Professor Konrad Kwiet, 2 December 2009.

55. See, for example, descriptions of such systematic discussions incorporating the views of eminent theologians and historians of the Holocaust in chapter 2.
56. COM minutes, 2 September 1994, SJM Institutional Archives.
57. The Hakoah Club was the main Jewish social club of Sydney until sold in 2009.
58. Interview with Marika Weinberger, 31 October 2006.
59. Interview with Marika Weinberger, 11 October 2009.
60. Correspondence from Sylvia Rosenblum to Alan Jacobs, 17 November 1993, Sydney Jewish Museum Institutional Archives.
61. Correspondence from Sylvia Rosenblum to Alan Jacobs, point 8.
62. Correspondence from Sylvia Rosenblum to Alan Jacobs, point 10.
63. Correspondence from Sylvia Rosenblum to Alan Jacobs, point 6.
64. Lamentations is traditionally understood to describe and commemorate the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, but has also come to be read on *Tisha B'Av* in memory of the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE and subsequent destructions in Jewish history.
65. Cabello, who is of Chilean Catholic background, has worked on several projects for the museum over the past decade, including an addition to the permanent exhibition *Serniki: Unearthing the Holocaust*. His most recent work is an extension and development of the SJM's *Resistance* display.
66. This inscription is placed at the entrance to the Sanctum, to the left of the eternal flame.
67. Sydney Jewish Museum, Sanctum of Remembrance brochure, 2009. Author unknown.
68. Speech given at the rededication and opening ceremony on *Yom HaShoah* 2005. Dr Hatfield was a survivor of Lutsk, where her family was murdered by the mobile killing units operating in 1941–2. The founder and benefactor of the Sydney Jewish Museum, John Saunders, supplied the original funding for the Sanctum of Remembrance.
69. Interviews undertaken at the SJM in October and November 2006.
70. Interviews undertaken at the SJM in October and November 2006.
71. Interviews undertaken at the SJM in October and November 2006.
72. Interviews undertaken at the SJM in October and November 2006.
73. Interviews undertaken at the SJM in October and November 2006.
74. Sharon Kangisser-Cohen, 'Remembering for Us: The Transgenerational Transmission of Holocaust Memory and Commemoration', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History,* 13, nos. 2–3 (2007), pp. 109–28.
75. Kangisser-Cohen, 'Remembering for Us', p. 123.
76. As noted in the introductory chapter this desire is not without historical precedent. After other major destructions in Jewish history such as the Crusades, new fast days and commemorative rituals were enacted in light of what was experienced as 'extraordinary suffering'. See Jacqueline Ninio, *Out of the Depths I Cry Out to You* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Rabbinical thesis, 1998).
77. Day of Holocaust Remembrance.
78. Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays* (New York: Touchstone, 1988), pp. 326–9.

79. Until recently, in Sydney *Yom HaShoah* was traditionally part of a week of Holocaust remembrance and education planned by the Sydney community under the auspices of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies. However, as time passes and less of the survivor generation is able to be active in these events, the decision was taken in 2007 to 'concentrate' commemoration on one day rather than a week. The day does include ceremonies at Rookwood and other communal sites, but the main events of the day are centered at the SJM.
80. Over the course of the day, survivors, descendants, invited guests and general museum visitors continuously read names of victims.
81. The Arch of Titus was erected in Rome, after the emperor's death, to commemorate chiefly the capture of Jerusalem. Included in the arch are reliefs depicting spoils from the Temple in Jerusalem.
82. See Stephen Schmidt-Wulffen, 'The Monument Vanishes', in James E. Young (ed.), *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1994), pp. 69–76.
83. The author is indebted to John Cabello for his generous engagement in discussion and debate concerning the Menorah sculpture, without which this section could not have been written.
84. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World,* p. 14.
85. Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 213; emphasis added.
86. This notion of 'global Holocaust memory' is explored in detail in the following section. For an introduction to this idea, see Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005).
87. Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), Preface p. ix.
88. This archetype of Abraham as man of faith finds its classic exposition in Soren Kierkegard, *Fear and Trembling* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954). Originally published in 1843.
89. For a full examination of this progression, see Levenson, *Death and Resurrection,* esp. part three, pp. 173–232.
90. Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction,* p. 50.
91. *Midrash Eilah Ezkerah* in Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction*, pp. 63–4.
92. *Ashkenaz* is the traditional name given to Franco-German Jewry.
93. Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 243–57.
94. Yisrael Gutman, 'Kiddush Ha-Shem and Kiddush Ha-Hayim', in Alex Grobman, (ed.), *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual,* vol. 1 (Chappaqua, NY: Rossel Books, 1984), p. 188.
95. Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction,* pp. 72–3. This type of literary strategy is typical of the *midrashic* method.
96. Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction,* pp. 72–3.
97. For a full accounting of the relevance of this motif in ultra-Orthodox thought, see Gershon Greenberg, assoc. ed., in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses During and After the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 11–27.
98. Katz (ed.), *Wrestling with God*, p. 192.

99. Katz (ed.), *Wrestling with God,* p. 405.
100. David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 262.
101. Francois Mauriac, 'Foreword', in Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1960).
102. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse,* p. 263.
103. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, 'Anne Frank and the Future of Holocaust Memory', *Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Annual Lecture* (1994), p. 5. http://www.ushmm.org/research/center/publications/occasional/2005-04-01/paper.pdf. For a recent compilation discussing the permutations of popular memory surrounding the diary, see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jeffrey Shandler (eds), *Anne Frank Unbound: Media, Imagination, Memory* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012).
104. Rosenfeld, 'Anne Frank and the Future of Holocaust Memory', p. 5.
105. Rosenfeld makes the point that there will never be a definitive edition as Anne never completed one and nor did she authorize any other author to do so.
106. Rosenfeld, 'Anne Frank and the Future of Holocaust Memory', p. 8.
107. Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), pp. 186–7.
108. Rosenfeld, 'Anne Frank and the Future of Holocaust Memory', p. 7.
109. Rosenfeld, 'Anne Frank and the Future of Holocaust Memory', p. 7.
110. Naomi Seidman, 'Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage', *Jewish Social Studies,* 3, no. 1 (1996), p. 1. Emphasis added.
111. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse,* p. 301.
112. Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora,* pp. 227–41.
113. The historians consulted for the exhibition were Professor Suzanne Rutland, University of Sydney, a specialist in Australian Jewish history and the SJM's Resident historian Professor Konrad Kwiet.
114. I refer here to excerpts from testimonies held at the SJM, including written sources as well as the SJM's own collection of survivor testimony (Project 120) and its dedicated server linked to the Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive (University of Southern California), which holds 2,481 testimonies of Holocaust survivors interviewed in Australia.
115. Ruth Wajnryb, *The Silence: How Tragedy Shapes Talk* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001), pp. 55–81.
116. Wajnryb, *The Silence*, pp. 55–81.
117. See chapter 2 of this study and Michael Berenbaum, *After Tragedy and Triumph: Essays in Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), in particular chapter 2, pp. 17–32.
118. Interviews undertaken at the SJM in October and November 2006.
119. This development is evidenced by a review of the SJM's education booklet 'For Schools' from 2003 to 2010 and is also evident in the public programmes surrounding the recent temporary exhibition (2007 and restaged in 2010) 'Butterflies of Hope' which, while addressing the experiences of child survivors of the Holocaust, incorporated a series of public programs that addressed the experience of children in other genocidal campaigns.

120. Interview undertaken 11 October 2009.
121. The names of the ceremony participants are withheld for privacy reasons.
122. Interviews undertaken with SJM staff December 2009.
123. Neil Levi, '"No Sensible Comparison?" The Holocaust in and out of Australia's History Wars', *History and Memory*, 19, no. 1 (2007), p. 125.
124. Levi, '"No Sensible Comparison?"', p. 128.
125. SJM mission statement 2007.
126. SJM mission statement 2009.
127. See, for example, James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); *The Changing Shape of Holocaust Memory* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1995); *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).
128. Judith E. Berman, *Holocaust Agendas: Conspiracies and Industries? Issues and Debates in Holocaust Memorialization* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), pp. 34–5.
129. Berman, *Holocaust Agendas*, p. 35.
130. Ruth Wisse, *The Modern Jewish Canon: A Journey through Language and Culture* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), p. 19.
131. Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The Holocaust from War Crime to Trauma Drama', *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (2002), p. 6.
132. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', p. 27.
133. Key landmarks for Alexander with regard to the increased popular consciousness of the Holocaust as 'sacred evil' are the publication and influence of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and,, in particular, the removal of much of the Jewish content of the book and subsequent play, the Eichmann trial and the screening of the television mini-series *Holocaust* to an American TV audience of one hundred million viewers.
134. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', p. 11. For a full explication of Alexanders' central thesis, see Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
135. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', p. 11.
136. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', pp. 21–6.
137. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals'. It is of note that there has been serious critique of Alexander's notion of the Holocaust as being both 'unique and not unique' and also his conclusion that it has led to 'historically unprecedented opportunities for ethnic, racial and religious justice'. See, in particular, Martin Jay, 'Allegories of Evil: A Response to Jeffrey Alexander', in Jeffrey C. Alexander with Martin Jay, Berhard Giesen, Michael Rothberg, Robert Manne, Nathan Glazer and Elihu and Ruth Katz, *Remembering the Holocaust: A Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009), pp. 105–13.
138. Alexander deliberately uses this appellation to highlight interpretive power of even the 'naming' of the genocide of European Jewry.
139. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', p. 29.
140. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', p. 51.

141. For an overview of the 'uniqueness debate' in Holocaust scholarship, see A. Dirk Moses, 'Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the "Racial Century": Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust,' *Patterns of Prejudice,* 36 no. 4 (2002), pp. 7–36; Gavriel Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies,* 13, no. 1 (1999), pp. 28–61.
142. Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', p. 34.
143. Robert Manne, 'Political Corruptions of a Moral Universal', in Jeffrey C. Alexander with Martin Jay, Berhard Giesen, Michael Rothberg, Robert Manne, Nathan Glazer and Elihu and Ruth Katz, *Remembering the Holocaust,* p. 144.
144. Manne, 'Political Corruptions of a Moral Universal', p. 142.
145. William F. S. Miles, 'Third World Views of the Holocaust', *Journal of Genocide Research,* 6, no. 3 (2004), pp. 379–81.
146. An example of this approach is found in Lilian Friedberg, 'Dare to Compare: Americanizing the Holocaust', *American Indian Quarterly,* 24, no. 3 (2000), pp. 353–80.
147. Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts* (London and New York: Verso 2001); Vinay Lal, 'Genocide, Barbaric Others, and the Violence of Categories: A Response to Omer Bartov', *The American Historical Review,* 103, no. 4 (1998) pp. 353–80; 'The Concentration Camp and Development: The Pasts and Future of Genocide', *Patterns of Prejudice,* 39, no. 2 (2005), pp. 220–43; Jürgen Zimmerer, 'The Birth of the Ostland out of the Spirit of Colonialism: A Postcolonial Perspective on the Nazi Policy of Conquest and Extermination', *Patterns of Prejudice,* 39, no. 2 (2005), pp. 220–33.
148. For example, Friedberg explicitly states that her work is intended to be 'a deliberate transgression of traditional boundaries in scholarship'.
149. For an example of this dynamic in the Australian context, see A. Dirk Moses, 'Genocide and Holocaust Consciousness in Australia', *History Compass,* 1 (2003), pp. 1–13.
150. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in an Age of Decolonization* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 1–7.
151. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory,* p. 3.
152. SJM mission statement prior to 2003.
153. SJM Mission and Vision Statement current as of 21 December 2009.
154. SJM Mission and Vision Statement current as of 21 December 2009.
155. Currently, there remain only two survivors on the SJM Board. At its inception the Board was dominated by survivors with non-survivors acting in the main in professional roles.
156. Most recently, this exhibition and the research of Chief Historian of the Australian War Crimes trials, Professor Konrad Kwiet, have become the basis for an education program commissioned by the Australian Institute for Police Management. The program centers on the issues of ethical leadership and individual responsibility and looks particularly at the role of police battalions in implementing the Final Solution.
157. SJM Education Department figures 2014. At the end of 2002 student visitor numbers were 7,500 per annum. At the close of the 2014 school year that number had increased to approximately 20,000.

158. Avril Alba, 'Teaching History and Teaching Ethics', *Teaching History: Journal of the History Teachers Association of NSW,* 39, No. 2 (2005), pp. 37–41.
159. The exemplar of such conflicts were the Cronulla Riots of 2005. See Greg Noble (ed.), *Lines in the Sand: The Cronulla Riots and the Limits of Australian Multiculturalism* (Sydney: Institute of Criminology, 2009).
160. For a full listing of committee members, see Avril Alba and X2 Design, *An Obligation to Remember, Exhibition Concept Development Plan*, Sydney Jewish Museum, 2014.
161. Alba and X2 Design, *An Obligation to Remember*, p. 6.
162. The term originally referrd to understandings of the immortality of the soul.
163. Most of the testimony will be taken from the SJM's own collection initiatives such as 'Project 120' and the 'Caplan Kwiet Collection' – both held at the museum. Where necessary, however, the testimony will be augmented using testimony from Australian survivors who participated in the USC Shoah Foundation project.
164. For a more detailed discussion of the intergenerational forces at work at the SJM, see Avril Alba, 'Set in Stone? The Intergenerational and Institutional Transmission of Holocaust Memory', in Nigel Eltringham and Pam Maclean (eds), *Remembering Genocide* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 92–111.
165. Berman, *Holocaust Agendas,* pp. 34–5.
166. 'Descendants' was added to the Association's name (hence AAJHS&D) in 1994 as intergenerational change became apparent.
167. Deborah Stone, 'Voyage of the Damned – Take Two', *JWire,* 16 December 2010, accessed 2 January 2011, http://www.jwire.com.au/news/voyage-of-the-damned-take-two/13990.
168. Stone, 'Voyage of the Damned – Take Two'.
169. Anna Berger 'Not the Holocaust', *JWire,* 27 December 2010, accessed 2 January 2011, http://www.jwire.com.au/news/not-the-holocaust/14161.
170. George Foster, ibid., Response to 'Voyage of the Damned – Take Two'.
171. 'Not the Holocaust'. *Tsedaka* and *Chesed* are commonly translated as 'charity and lovingkindness', although the Hebrew root of the former is literally translated as 'justice'.
172. Marika Weinberger referred to this partnership as a 'handshake' between John Saunders and the AAJHS in which the former agreed to give the financial backing and the latter the 'man-power' to realize the project. At that point, the Association did not include '& Descendants' in its title. Interview with Marika Weinberger, 31 October 2006.
173. 'Aborigines Protest', *The Argus,* 3 December 1938, p. 7.
174. At the present moment, the inclusion of the Cooper story into the SJM's permanent exhibition is under discussion.
175. The most concrete expression of this proclivity is that the annual 'Days of Shoah Remembrance' remain under the authority and purview of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, the non-sectarian and non-denominational roof body of the NSW Jewish community. The 'Days of Remembrance' include traditional elements, but are manifestly secular in that they are largely enacted in spaces such as the Sydney Jewish Museum and are not under the auspices of rabbinical authority.

Conclusion: The Return of Myth to History

1. Ismar Schorsch, 'The Holocaust and Jewish Survival', *Midstream* (January 1981), p. 42.
2. Yosef Yerushalmi makes a similar point in his observation that history has become 'the faith of fallen Jews'. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor,* p. 86.
3. For an introduction to the category of redemption in Jewish thought, see Arthur A. Cohen, 'Redemption', in Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr(eds), *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements and Beliefs* (New York: Free Press, 1988), pp. 761–5.
4. Cohen notes that this definition shares much with traditional Jewish ideas of repentance, *tshuvah,* which can be translated as 'a turning toward' or 'to return'. Ibid., p. 764.
5. The symposium took place on 15 November 2010 at the *Mémorial de la Shoah* in Paris.
6. Manachem Kellner, 'Jews and their Messiahs', *The Jewish Quarterly* (Autumn, 1994), pp. 7–13.
7. Kellner, 'Jews and their Messiahs', p. 12.
8. Kellner, 'Jews and their Messiahs', p. 12.
9. Michael Berenbaum, 'Is the Memory of the Holocaust Being Exploited?', *Midstream,* 50, no. 3 (April 2004), p. 2.
10. Reference is made here to Pierre Nora's famous description of memorials as *lieux de mémoire*; Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer, vols 1–3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).
11. For a critique of these co-options of Holocaust memory, see Alvin H. Rosenfeld, 'The Assault on Holocaust Memory', *American Jewish Yearbook* (2001), pp. 3–20.
12. This references Aharon Appelfield's intriguing statement, 'We are used to thinking that the Second World War extinguished the last spark of Jewish faith. That is not the case. Like every volcanic eruption, the Holocaust brought up strata from its depths. The question remains, however, and will always remain: How can we transform it into a spiritual vision?' Aharon Appelfield, *Beyond Despair* (New York: Fromm International Publishing Company, 1994), p. 55.
13. Amos Goldberg, 'If This Is the Nature of Human Nature? Re-reading Holocaust Diaries', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 33 (2005), pp. 381–429.
14. Goldberg, 'If This Is the Nature of Human Nature?', p. 395.
15. Goldberg, 'If This Is the Nature of Human Nature?', p. 395.
16. Goldberg, 'If This Is the Nature of Human Nature?', p. 395.
17. Goldberg, 'If This Is the Nature of Human Nature?', p. 429.
18. As found in Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 51.
19. Zachary Braiterman, *(God) after Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 178.
20. Fred Skolnik, Editor In Chief and Michael Berenbaum, Executive Editor, *Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 17* (Jerusalem: Thomson Gale, 2007), p. 151.

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All archives, institutions and libraries consulted are listed below. A brief summary is provided indicating the particularity of the material accessed where necessary. Comprehensive citations for all such material are to be found in the endnotes section.

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Sydney Jewish Museum

This archive has not yet been systematically organized and therefore all documents utilized are named individually.

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Yad Vashem

As noted, the research on Yad Vashem in this thesis was undertaken mainly through the use of published documents alongside individual interviews. As with the Sydney Jewish Museum, all documents are therefore named individually.

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