Spatial Storytelling in Yad Vashem: An Ethnographic Exploration on the (Dis)Placement of the Sacred in Israel's National Holocaust Memorial

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Abstract

This thesis traces the interface of Holocaust memory and religious text, symbolism, and motifs at Yad Vashem, Israels official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. Working with the notion of *spatial storytelling*, I analyze how religion is infused into the commemorative practices of Yad Vashem, and how this is spatialized on the memorial's grounds. Taking 'storytelling' as the primary methodological concept for my ethnographic engagement with Yad Vashem, this thesis explores issues of reflexivity through putting researcher-researched dialectics center stage. Through spatial analysis and by following the body's course through Yad Vashem, I suggest how mentalism and materialism can be thought off conjointly in walking over Yad Vashem's grounds and in engaging with changing understanding of trauma in Israel and its visual repercussions on the landscape of Yad Vashem. The thesis ultimately argues that the nature and location of religion at Yad Vashem can be understood in terms of transferable biblical quality onto Yad Vashem's grounds. Through sacred reference and ritualized practice, Yad Vashem cloaks the memory of the Holocaust in a biblical garb, begging the question whether the stories of the Holocaust themselves are not stories of a new Bible. The analysis necessitates a reflexive turn inwards that further denaturalizes the concept of 'religion' itself. Through taking serious (dis)placeable biblical quality and pointing to a biblical *idea*, the thesis points to the interconnections of memory, religion, and sacrality, whilst simultaneously questioning the effect of the sacred status for Holocaust memory itself.

Keywords: Holocaust memory; reflexivity; ritualization; spatial storytelling; Yad Vashem

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Introduction: Yad Vashem – The Architecture of Memory

I t is a grey Sunday morning when I get off the light train at Har ha-Zikaron, the Mount of Remembrance, in West-Jerusalem. The hill feels like an island of tranquility and meditation amidst Jerusalem's busy and contested streets. Looking over the Jerusalemite hillsides, I catch a first glimpse of the gigantic prismatic structure cutting through the mountain. It looms there in the distance, aggressive and dispassionate, yet appealing. Together with some other early visitors, I walk the remaining distance through a freshly planted pine forest leading towards Yad Vashem, Israel's central site for Holocaust commemoration since 1957.

The setting is serene. The quietness that surrounds the hill belies the disturbing images and stories that we, as visitors, are about to encounter. As I walk underneath an impressive aqueduct that leads to the visitor's piazza, I turn back to give the aqueduct a second look. The smooth and gigantic structure penetrates into the blue sky, supported by twelve big archways. Inscribed on it I read the prophecy of Ezekiel 37:14: "I will put my breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your soil."[1] I am struck by the symbolic force of the text in this landscape. I continue on my way, over the piazza, towards the visitors' centre.

Fig. I: View of the southern end of the Holocaust History Museum © Author

Although Yad Vashem opened its doors more than six decades ago, this first building I encounter stems from the massive redevelopments that were concluded in 2005 with the grant reopening of Yad Vashem. I walk in together with young Israeli soldiers, who pay a mandatory

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[1] For all the Bible passages discussed in this research, I have made use of Bible translations into English from The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible (1952).

visit to Yad Vashem as they enter the army. A friendly woman behind the counter gives me my ticket, together with a map of the gigantic site of Yad Vashem, comprising over fifteen memorial sites that were installed over a period of sixty years. The name 'Yad Vashem' (*memorial [lit. 'hand'] and name*) is based on a verse from the book of Isaiah 56:5: "To them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever." This scriptural promise of immortality through remembrance will be fulfilled by those who pay a visit to Yad Vashem.

My first stop is the Holocaust History Museum. I reach the museum via a bridge that slopes downward, ending on the side of the prism I saw earlier. The prismatic structure is built into the mountain, cutting through it like a scar. The bridge I cross is called *Bridge to a Vanished World*, and as I descend, I hear a tour guide telling her group that this bridge forms a separation between two worlds, one that we can imagine and one that we cannot. I follow the group inside and within seconds, Jerusalem's radiant light makes place for the encompassing darkness of the museum. Disoriented by my surroundings, I adjust my eyes and try to make sense of where I am. Ahead of me lies a long triangular tunnel. All the way at the end of the tunnel I can see light. Between me and the end, I would learn later, lies only 180 meters. On the wall to the left, the interior of the prism's southern end, a video shows people waving and smiling at the camera. They seem to be welcoming us into their world. The moving images render the figures life-size, depicting Jewish life in Europe before 1933. "We begin at the end," the tour guide says. The point is clear: this is what will be, has been, lost.

I start walking to the ominous sound of a children's choir singing the Hatikva, that would become Israel's national anthem, coming from the large visual installment all the way at the prism's beginning. Although I have come to Yad Vashem with an intellectual interest, aiming to do ethnography on the museum's commemorative practices, I am worried that the emotional and highly affective character of the museum will overwhelm me. It would. Yad Vashem is filled with horrific stories of Holocaust victims and survivors, and the museum was created to provide me with an emotional, experiential visit, not just a sober history of the Holocaust. I can see the story unfolding before my eyes. Through the tunnel, I can see the story's beginning, its middle, and its ending. The museum's narrative has an extension in the architecture of the museum, and indeed, in the location of Yad Vashem on Har ha-Zikaron. This narrative has an extension in space. It is the way in which Yad Vashem spatially constructs its narrative of Holocaust remembrance that is the topic of this research.

Yad Vashem came into being on August 28, 1953, when the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, passed the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law 5713-1953, which states that Yad Vashem was established to commemorate the six million Jews that died at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators. Yad Vashem lies adjacent to Mount Herzl, Jerusalem's national cemetery for Israeli and Zionist leaders as well as soldiers. This physical proximity forges a link between national heroism, Zionist principles, and the martyrdom of the Holocaust victims. Positioned on Har ha-Zikaron, Holocaust victims are subsumed into an Israeli and Zionist collectivity.

In the two hours following my entrance, I would be bombarded with and nullified by the horrendous exhibitions I would see. In a total of eleven exhibition rooms, or chapters, the horrors of the Holocaust unfold before my eyes. The further I get into the museum, the more horrendous the exhibitions become, accompanied by video testimonies of survivors and gruesome photos and artifacts. Halfway through, standing in the exhibition on the Warsaw Ghetto, I am

overwhelmed. My head hurts, I want to leave. But the museum does not let me. The tunnel like structure is cut up with a multiplicity of cracks, or ruptures, in the floor, symbolizing turning points in WWII history. Visitors have to go through all of it, no escape. The prismatic structure lets in light from above, giving the feeling of transcendence. The sound of the Hatikva follows me throughout the exhibition, alternated with pieces of Philip Glass and Schubert.

As I progress on my way towards the light, the cries of the survivors fill the museum. Visitors around me are crying as well. The end is in sight. Europe is liberated from Nazi rule, and shortly after, the deathcamps, with their few survivors left, as well. The Hatikva returns, this time from the direction of the light at the end of the tunnel. To the sound of Ben Gurion declaring the independence of the State of Israel in 1948, I walk towards the light. One of the last exhibitions is the *Hall of Names*. Yad Vashem's mission is to collect the names of every six million Jews who died in the Holocaust. Yad Vashem thus posits itself as a repository of memory. The mission however may never be fulfilled. The hall is circular, and its domed ceiling portrays the portraits of 600 victims, ascending to heaven.

Finally, I enter onto a beautiful viewers' balcony overlooking the majestic hills of Jerusalem, covered with cypresses, cedars and pine trees. The claustrophobic sides of the triangular structure literally curl outward, and a feeling of freedom emerges. Nothing but silence and contemplation fill the blue sky. Birds fly over and in the distance, construction cranes are visible. Other visitors around me too are nullified and silent, but at last, we have made it. From darkness, we step out into the light again. At Yad Vashem, Israel presents itself as a promise fulfilled, a sanctuary from exile and diaspora, a restored future in an ancient land. Death is answered with life, embedding the memory of the dead in a near mythic future.

As I leave the balcony and museum over *The Bridge of Life*, I try to understand what just happened. What had I just gone through? I had seen more than merely a history of the Holocaust. I felt that I had encountered several entangled narratives of prophecy, destruction and redemption. As I walk back over a small courtyard, I see a list of museum donators on a wall: "I, with upright heart, freely offered all these things," it reads, from 1 Chronicles 29.17. As I continue walking over the *Valley of the Righteous Among the Nations*, an alleyway with freshly planted trees dedicated to Gentiles that rescued Jews during the war, I encounter another passage from the Bible at a viewpoint overlooking Jerusalem: "The name of the Lord is a fortified tower. The righteous run to it and are safe," from Proverbs 18.10. In thought, I walk back towards the visitors' center.

There, new tour groups are prepared by their guides to enter the Holocaust History Museum: "Just remembering one story is enough," says a tour guide to her group, and continues: "Because he who saves a life is as if he saves an entire world," paraphrased from the Sanhedrin. Leaving through the same door through which I entered, a passage from Joel on the wall admonishes visitors to remember: "Has the like of this happened in your days or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, and let your children tell theirs, and their children the next generation!" from 1 Joel 2-3. I walk onto the piazza and make my way for the exit. Approaching the aqueduct again, I come back to Ezekiel's prophecy. A prophecy fulfilled. More than one story was being told at Yad Vashem.

On my first visit to Yad Vashem during my fieldwork period in Jerusalem in the early spring of 2023, I was struck by the multiplicity of narratives that I encountered. Opposed to contemporary countermonuments that are intended to provide an open-ended reflection on the

past, Yad Vashem instead offers a clear narrative that causes heavy emotional impact. It acknowledges the pain and loss of the six million Jews that perished in the Holocaust,[2] while simultaneously presenting Israel as the redemption for Jewish suffering. Set in a framework of redemption, a prophetic start is followed up by a representation of the Holocaust inside the museum, to be concluded with a Zionist ending, or 'Zionist homecoming' (Ockman 2006, 20), overlooking the hills of Jerusalem on the balcony. As a tourist, looking to emancipate myself through education, I inevitably figure within Yad Vashem's redemptive framework. All visitors encounter an intricately crafted yet seamless redemptive narrative at Yad Vashem. The entire complex evokes redemption through aesthetic form, historical knowledge, political response, and transcendental possibility (Reynolds 2018, 185).

Although Yad Vashem's redemptive narrative might be 'out there' in the museum, these narratives unfold conjointly, fundamentally through its visitors, by virtue of their bodies strolling over Yad Vashem's compounds. It appeared to me that Yad Vashem's narrative of the Holocaust figured in a larger spatial constellation in which an abundance of religious motifs, symbolism, and Bible passages figure, and which is informed by multiple threads of redemptive narratives. It is this spatialization of Holocaust memory at Yad Vashem, what I call Yad Vashem's *spatial storytelling*, that is the subject of this research, in which I trace how religious, or biblical, symbolism figures within the commemorative practices of Yad Vashem.

Yad Vashem is pregnant with an aura of sacrality. Apart from the Biblical origins of the name 'Yad Vashem,' it is the second most visited site in Israel after the Western Wall. In one of the institution's publications, former Chairman and curator of Yad Vashem Avner Shalev provocatively describes Yad Vashem as a religious space:

> Jerusalem is a city that symbolizes deep ties for the three monotheistic religions, based on the Ten Commandments. At their heart is the commandment "Thou shall not kill", asserting the right to life of human beings created in God's image. It was from Jerusalem that the Prophet Isaiah's vision of cosmic coexistence and eternal peace was proclaimed. Now, the Mount of Remembrance, in this same city, reverberates with those values and the disintegration of the Ten Commandments' injunctions (Shalev 2010, 9).

Adding to that, Shalev speaks of accommodating an "educational *midrash*" in the "monastic air" of Yad Vashem (Shalev 2010, 9-13). The current Chairman of Yad Vashem, Dani Dayan, similarly flirts with religious parlance when he tells me that Yad Vashem is "sacred in the secular sense of the word."[3] Although he is a staunch atheist, Dayan declares Zionism to be his religion.[4] In describing his architectural design of Yad Vashem, the Israeli-Canadian architect Moshe Safdie (1938) even describes Yad Vashem as a sacred place (Safdie 2006, 96).

Tourists have described to have had religious experiences on the compounds. A look in Yad Vashem's guestbook reveals the transcendental appreciation of the complex: inscriptions such as 'God is here,' or 'may God hail this land,' clearly point to the religious sentiments and the crypto-

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[2] In this research, I systematically use the word 'Holocaust' instead of the word 'Shoah' to refer to the genocide of the Jewish people penetrated by Nazi Germany. This choice rests on the institutionalized and widespread use of 'Holocaust', both in Yad Vashem's exhibitions and discourses, as well as in the scholarly literature on the topic.
[3] Interview with Dani Dayan, March 1 2023, Jerusalem.
[4] Interview with Dani Dayan, March 1 2023, Jerusalem.

religious behavior amongst Yad Vashem's visitors. The landscape and architecture of Yad Vashem further reinforce this religious element, drowned as they are in metaphors of transcendence. As they walk over Yad Vashem's grounds, visitors encounter a multiplicity of Bible passages in the landscape, some of which are mentioned above. Looking at the visitors' center, my tour guide Zara compares the building to a *sukkah*, a hut constructed for the Jewish festival of Sukkot.[5] Another tour guide, Avram, refers to Anne Frank (1929-1945) as a 'deity' as we walk past an exhibition dedicated to the Netherlands in WWII.[6] Tour guides reverberate a transcendental discourse in explicitly drawing on Bible passages, Jewish law, and other elements of Jewish religious traditions to describe the commemorative practices at Yad Vashem.

As I argue, Yad Vashem is a place pregnant with religious motifs, symbolisms, and text, both on the level of the institution's discourse, of visitor reception, and in the landscape of Yad Vashem. Notions of the sacred are well in place at Yad Vashem. How are we to understand the nature and location of religion at Yad Vashem? How do these different religious motifs function within Yad Vashem's commemorative practices of the Holocaust, and to which extent is the Holocaust herewith subsumed into a divine order? Answering these questions provides insight into the interface of Bible studies, religious studies, and Holocaust memory. The interaction between these two fields allows us to further understand Holocaust memory within religious studies.

Research Problem: Spatial Storytelling

In this research, I explore the spatial storytelling of Yad Vashem. Specifically, I examine the way in which the institution and museum incorporate religious motifs and symbolism within their commemorative practices, and how this is spatialized on the Yad Vashem grounds. This endeavor rests on a spatial analysis of religion. I aim to locate religion within Yad Vashem, and in doing so, reflect upon space as a medium in which religion is located. Approaching Yad Vashem from a spatial perspective, I lean on theorizations around space and landscape of Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Michel de Certeau (1925-1986), and Christopher Tilley (1955). Chiefly, however, I am informed by the theory of Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) in his work *The Production of Space* (1974), and by the work of Kim Knott and Stuart Elden, among others, who have used Lefebvre's theory in the fields of geography, political philosophy, and religious studies. Within religious studies itself, space became a significant subject of inquiry with the work of Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), whose ideas on sacred geographies have become foundational for scholarly work on the meaning and power of the sacred in space and time (Eliade 1959, 26). Second to Eliade, Jonathan Z. Smith (1938-2017) worked to dislodge theory on sacred space from its base within phenomenological conceptions of the sacred and space, and re-engaged it with constructionist anthropological and sociological approaches that stress the importance of ritual. Ritual, Smith writes "is not a response to 'the sacred'; rather, something or someone is made sacred by ritual" (Smith 1987, 105).

Through a study of different Bible passages, transcendental motifs and religious symbolism, I show how Yad Vashem incorporates religion into its commemorative practices surrounding Holocaust memory. As I show, the nature and location of religion at Yad Vashem can be

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[5] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.
[6] Interview with Avram, March 11 2023, Jerusalem.

understood against the backdrop of discussions surrounding diversity in Israel and the sacrality of the Holocaust.

My claims are informed by my ethnography, which, apart from interviews with multiple individuals working at Yad Vashem and with four non-Israeli tourists, consists of an exploration of the role of my body in doing fieldwork, and of different modes of storytelling. 'Storytelling' carries within it a social process of sense-making and meaning-making that allow me to work with my positionality and subjectivity. In the time of my fieldwork, I visited Yad Vashem over ten times. Walking over the compounds time after time, I started to feel that I was engaging in a relation with its walls, halls, exhibitions, and narrative. I became familiar with the site's repetitive forces and its rhythms. In turn, Yad Vashem left an ever-unfolding imprint on me, bending, shattering and complicating my ideas, leaving me to rewrite my story of Yad Vashem time on end. I felt Yad Vashem's walls to 'push back against me' (Morgan 2021, 9). In short, I became aware of the reciprocal process of storytelling unfolding in between me and Yad Vashem. It is this dialectic that I explore in the present research, that reflects a development in my thinking that I try to explicate as much as possible.

I approach Yad Vashem's memorial site as a palimpsest that reflects changing understandings of death and national sacrifice. Instead of seeing national monuments as conservative phenomena (James 2006), whose "most fundamental purpose [...] is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things" (Nora 1989, 19), I approach Yad Vashem's landscape as a dynamic and performative *lieux de mémoire*, whose typography reflects changing understandings of trauma, death, sacrifice, and imaginations of the national Israeli collectivity.

Lefebvre's analysis points us to the dynamics of space and the mutually constitutive function of space and its inhabitants, on which Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) writes: "The group not only transforms the space into which it has been inserted, but also yields and adapts to its physical surroundings. It becomes enclosed within the framework it has built [...] Place and group... each receive... the imprint of the other" (Halbwachs 1941, 30). Spaces may reflect social hierarchies and accepted cosmologies (Smith 1987), but once accomplished, those spaces shape those who move through them.

Alongside the strategies of spatial construction are tactics of spatial use, including pedestrian movement through space (De Certeau 1984, 91-110). Just as the movement of my eyes across the pages of a book constructs a meaningful story out of its individual letters and words, so too does the movement of my body – a walk – through space construct a meaningful spatial story. Usually, we find a socially constrained 'right way' to approach spatial paths. Archeologist Christopher Tilley calls such paths 'strong texts', "frequently repeated narratives, in which geographical features of the landscape act as mnemonic pegs upon which moral teachings hang" (Tilley 2004, 33).

'Spatial storytelling', the idea of a space telling a story, is instructive for my present purposes, because the concept alludes to a proximity between text and surrounding. Looking at how Bible passages figure in the landscape of Yad Vashem, 'spatial storytelling' de-essentializes 'text' as something set apart and instead points to the omnipresence of text in the form of story (King 2017, 5). This de-essentializing of text aligns with contemporary debates in religious studies over the place and purpose of text within our discipline, draws our attention to the materiality of text, and brings text into dialogue with Yad Vashem's larger spatial constellation – Yad Vashem's spatial story. Based on the nomadic character of Bible passages in a wide variety of contexts and

domains, Brennan Breed talks about a transferability of biblical quality (Breed 2014, 7). The biblical can readily alter from its form when entering into a new domain, in turn transforming its new environment.

Lefebvre argues that a spatial approach to religion has the capacity to form a theoretical unity between mentalist and materialist fields through the notion of the social (Lefebvre 1991 [1974], 11). In this research, I analyze Yad Vashem with the help of Lefebvre's spatial triad, as developed in *The Production of Space*. His analytical triad represents three dialectically interconnected aspects of social space: mental, physical and social (Lefebvre 1991, 33), and refers to the way in which space is thought, sensed and practiced (Knott 2005, 36). Lefebvre's spatial triad, informed by his guiding interest in the relation between Hegel (1770-1831) and Marx (1818-1883) – between idealism and materialism – points us to the dynamics between different domains of religion, and thus, can expand our understanding of material religion (Knott 2005). In the present research, I unfold Lefebvre's triad over the whole of it, respectively distinguishing between conceived or mentalist space, perceived or physical space, and lived or social space.

Lefebvre stresses the foundational role of the human body in the social character of space, and indeed, for space to unfold:

> The whole of (social) space proceeds from the body, even though it so metamorphoses the body that is may forget it altogether – even though it may separate itself so radically from the body as to kill it. The genesis of a far-away order can be accounted for only on the basis of the order that is nearest to us – namely the order of the body. Within the body itself, spatially considered, the successive levels constituted by the senses... prefigure the layers of social space and their interconnections (Lefebvre 1991, 405).

This focus on the human body is instructive in seeing how these texts, in their material presence, are entangled in larger spatial assemblages that unfold through the body. With this focus, I move against deconstructionist views of the body, which Bryan Turner characterizes as follows: "[T]he lived body drops from view as the text becomes the all-pervasive topic of research" (Turner 1996, 28). By virtue of the movement of the human body over the museum grounds, the Bible passages and religious texts become entangled in the museum's historical and political narrative. As I argue, the prophetic nature of the religious text present at Yad Vashem, by virtue of the visitor's movements along its paths, allows for a spatial (dis)placement of both the text and the museum narrative: through the visitors' movement along the paths, a spatial story is constructed in which the Holocaust is subsumed into a divine order. Examining the interplay between Holocaust memory, imaginings of the Israeli collectivity, and religious discourse on the Yad Vashem grounds, I show how (national) memory of the Holocaust is imbued with religious symbolism and meaning, but also how religious discourse is, by way of transposition, imbued with national meaning. Traffic runs both ways on the museum's paths.

A spatial analysis forms the theoretical anchor point through which we can understand this interface of the biblical and Holocaust memory at Yad Vashem. By way of the spatial analysis, this thesis questions the boundaries between the disciplines of Holocaust studies, memory studies, and religious studies. This is necessary to understand comprehensively post-Holocaust reception of the biblical, to further denaturalize the concept of 'religion', and to understand new locations of religion.

The academic relevance that I signal in a spatial analysis of Yad Vashem, and the arguments that emerge from this, directly pertain to the empirical reality of Yad Vashem, which is currently struggling with issues of diversity and representation, a switch in leadership in 2021, ever increasing visitor numbers, and a deficit of 42.7 million NIS. My analysis of religion at Yad Vashem thus points us to the interconnectedness of religion, the museum as a reflection of Israeli society, and heritage politics.

Theoretical Framework

Using 'storytelling' as a primary concept in my research, I explicitly move away from traditionalist empiricism, which is characterized by a clear distinction between researcher and researched. Acknowledging that the empirical or experiential field in which I operate is inherently social and intersubjective (Jackson 1989), I am guided by a focus on the *interplay* between myself and my interlocutors, and between myself and the physical surroundings of Yad Vashem.

This focus on interplay evokes a reflexive attitude, and requires me to take myself seriously as a research tool. My ethnography can thus be said to lean towards an autoethnography. Autoethnography, Deborah Reed-Danahay argues in her seminal work on autoethnographic research methods, has the power for a "rewriting of the self and the social" (Reed-Danahay 1997, 4). It pushes methodological boundaries in order to address new sorts of research questions. My discussion on storytelling unfolds based on the work of philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) and anthropologist Michael Jackson, who have argued that storytelling is both what makes sociality possible, as well as what makes individuality possible (Arendt 1958; Jackson 2008). Regarding 'storytelling' as a social process, the task of the researcher could be to interrogate the processes of meaning-making that are caught up in the construction of a narrative or story.

At the same time, 'storytelling' also points to an observable phenomenon, to stories themselves. Yad Vashem is rich in the stories that it tells, and in my fieldwork I encountered a tremendous amount of stories, from the exhibitions at the museum, from my interlocutors at Yad Vashem, and from my tourist interlocutors. A point of clarification is in place. Whereas above, I sketched out how religious symbolism is used in Yad Vashem for meaning-making practices, at the same time, my approach to Yad Vashem is very much in line with material religion.

How to make sense of that friction? Religious studies has found itself in a split since the material turn in the study of religion. How do we conceptualize religion, moving away from anthropocentrism, moving towards the material (Hazard 2013)? Birgit Meyer describes it as the task of religious studies to bring material understandings of religion back into new understandings of religion (Meyer forthcoming, 2). This phrasing, of bringing something *back* into something *new*, goes to the heart of the matter, and it ultimately points to the simultaneity with which both mentalist and materialist approaches abide. Thus, while at once a distinction between spatial 'stories' as phenomenon and spatial 'storytelling' as a process is useful and simultaneously alerts to both mental and material practices, at the same time I acknowledge that these two are fundamentally part of the same field, in line with Lefebvre's theorization.

This focus on storytelling in the landscape of Yad Vashem aligns my research with some prevalent themes in the study of religion following the 'Copernican Turn' (King 2017, 4), of moving beyond Cartesian or anthropocentric worldviews (Hodder 2014) towards material understandings of religion (Meyer 2009) in which the dialectics between researcher and researched form a prominent focus of inquiry (Pasi 2008). In discussing Yad Vashem's memorial

landscape, the social qualities of 'storytelling' furthermore bear resemblance to those of 'memory'. The present discussion therefore leans on important work on community formation around collective memory (Halbwachs 1992 [1925]; Anderson 2006 [1983]). In my spatial analysis of Yad Vashem, I add material weight to this discussion using Meyer's concept of 'aesthetic formations.' Aesthetic formations refer to the tangible spaces and objects around or through which a group *imagines* itself a community (Meyer 2009, 5). Meyer thus adds to Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' in pointing to the necessary material mediation in these imaginings. In the context of Yad Vashem, representations of the Holocaust always require aesthetic considerations, which are specific to different (national) communities.

This pulls the present research directly towards the relation between Yad Vashem and the national environment in which it is situated: Israel. Viewing museums as sites where national imageries emerge in response to national changes, I examine the interaction between cultural politics in Israel pertaining to ethnic diversity and changing understandings of trauma, and museum practice in Yad Vashem. Specifically, I trace the genealogy of Yad Vashem's landscape by examining how the changes in Holocaust memorialization in Israel over the past six decades are reflected in the visual field of memory-making in Yad Vashem. At the same time, I discuss some of the current challenges that Yad Vashem faces regarding presenting 'the Jewish perspective' of the Holocaust, and how these challenges are reflected inside the Holocaust History Museum.

In discussing Yad Vashem as a Holocaust memorial site, inevitably I hover between putting the institution and museum in dialogue with other Holocaust memorial sites around the world on the one hand, and viewing Yad Vashem as a distinctively Israeli site on the other. In his seminal work on Holocaust monuments around the world, James E. Young argues that Holocaust memory is closely tied up to national and political interests, and even that "in every nation's memorials and museums, a different Holocaust is remembered" (Young 1993, viii-ix). I trace how these global and local forces interact and produce specific practices of Holocaust commemoration that might be termed 'glocal' (Robertson 1995). In this analysis, I ascribe an important role to Yad Vashem's most important architectural contributor, Moshe Safdie.

Description of the Fieldwork: Redemptive Walks

This research is based on an ethnography I conducted in and around Yad Vashem in the early spring of 2023, which lasted for the short period of one month due to an unexpected restriction of the time I was permitted to be inside Israel. The ethnographic material I gathered within Yad Vashem consists of interviews with the Chairman of Yad Vashem, Dani Dayan, with former Chairman and curator, Avner Shalev, and with two tour guides with whom I took tours in Yad Vashem, Avram and Zara.[7] To substantiate the ethnographic material, I have made use of the archive of Yad Vashem's library. Apart from leaflets and brochures, two central publications of Yad Vashem for my research are *Yad Vashem: Moshe Safdie – The Architect of Memory* (2006) and *Facts and Feelings: Dilemmas in Designing the Yad Vashem Holocaust History* (2010). Besides these works I have consulted multiple works by Yad Vashem's chief architect, Moshe

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[7] I have anonymized the names and all other personal information of all of the interlocutors in the present research with whom I have conducted interviews, except for Dani Dayan and Avner Shalev, whom have given permission to use their names. All interlocutors have given consent for incorporating their voices in the thesis.

Safdie, including his recently published memories, entitled *If Walls Could Speak – My Life in Architecture* (2022).

Next to this, I have taken four walks in Yad Vashem with four non-Israeli tourists who had planned to go to Yad Vashem: Indie, Hannah, Ruth and Aria. The purpose of these walks is multifold. Within research on Holocaust memorials there is little to no primary data on the reception of the narrative in Holocaust museums. Thus, by paying attention to the way in which my interlocutors experience Yad Vashem, I fill an important lacunae in research. Walking with tourists can be understood in line with approaches in museum studies that have characterized the 'participatory turn', focusing on audience interpretation (Arnaboldi and Diaz Lema 2021, 2).

Secondly, my interlocutors' reception of the narrative is the result of the interplay between them and the museum. The processes of meaning-making that result from this interplay are instructive to study with regards the dual constituted spatial storytelling in Yad Vashem. This aligns the discussion to Lefebvre's spatial triad. In turn, the walks with my interlocutors and the subsequent interviews we held have reflexive potential: in reporting on my research findings, I too am involved in storytelling. Throughout, I explore the theoretical implications of this kind of subjectivity.

There is a peculiarity to my group of tourist interlocutors. Whereas much anthropological fieldwork transpires on the basis of a certain amount of trust between the researcher and the researched, none of my interlocutors I had known for longer than three weeks before going with them on a rather intimate walk. I was aware of how delicate my request to join them to Yad Vashem was, and to talk with them afterwards. Unique about this approach to my fieldwork is that the relation between me and my interlocutors was characterized by an unescapable superficiality which actually proved instructive. Instead of building upon a relationship of trust directed 'backwards', we had to build upon a trust directed 'forwards': making plans for a friendship, and to see each other again, in Israel or elsewhere.

Like noted above, multiple levels of redemption are simultaneously at work in Yad Vashem, including aesthetic redemption, cognitive redemption, political redemption, and theological redemption. Similarly, tourism can be seen as a redemptive phenomenon in itself, viewing it as pilgrimage or education (Reynolds 2018, 187). Anthropologists have described tourism as a response to the disenchantment of the everyday life in the modern era (Crick 1989, 313; MacCannell 2013 [1976], 43). Tourists are in search for something extraordinary, and tourism offers transformative experiences (Feldman 2008, 244). Tourism's redemptive promise is one thing, but its fulfillment is another. It is useful therefore to see how tourists react to, or interact with, the redemptive narrative they encounter at Yad Vashem.

Yad Vashem is a huge complex, comprising over 45 acres of land and over fifteen memorial sites. The complex includes an art museum, a synagogue, performance and lecture spaces, and research centers. Tourists can choose their own paths as they go. Compared with the totality of Yad Vashem, the walks I took with my interlocutors are extremely small. The path we embark on runs from the Yad Vashem's entrance square, or piazza, to the viewers' balcony at the end of the Holocaust History Museum. Afterwards, we walked back over the courtyard where visitors contemplate their visit to the museum, then over the *Valley of the Righteous Among the Nations*, back through the visitors' center, to then finally walk back onto the piazza. Although the demarcation of this path is somewhat arbitrary, in Tilley's phrasing it can however be considered

a 'strong path' or 'strong text' (Tilley 2004, 33), in that this is the path that most people take when visiting Yad Vashem (see appendix for reference).

Apart from my ethnographical engagement with my interlocutors at Yad Vashem and the tourists, I also spent a great amount of time at Yad Vashem on my own, repeatedly going through exhibitions, pondering over artifacts, monuments, and different landscapes. In doing so, I picked up on many elements of Yad Vashem's spatial storytelling, all of which centered around repetition. The act of museum going repeats itself and therefore evolves into a ritual reenactment of a narrative in time. In paying attention to the rhythms of Yad Vashem's landscapes, to those of my fellow visitors by eavesdropping on them and talking with them, and those of the dozens of tour guides, I developed a strong sense of the Yad Vashem's rhythms – rhythms of the space, of the tour guides, and of my fellow visitors.

The Holocaust and the Sacred

Like noted above, there is little empirical data on the reception of narrative in Holocaust museums and memorials. Additionally, no ethnographic work has been conducted on Yad Vashem which takes religion as a serious category of inquiry. In this research, I am not primarily concerned with the historical accuracy of Yad Vashem's presentation of the Holocaust. Although along the way do I criticize different elements of Yad Vashem's narrative, my research is first and foremost not historical. Instead, I work on the aesthetic formations around shifting memory of the Holocaust in Israel, and explore the intersections between Holocaust memorialization, religion, and ideas of sacrality.

The Zionist vision of redemption and life through homecoming works in contrast with destruction and suffering in exile. My discussion on religion in Yad Vashem runs parallel to the 'sacred duty' to remember in Judaism (Hansen-Glucklich 2014, 8). This 'duty' has particular resonance concerning Holocaust memory.

Sacrality in relation to the Holocaust has traditionally been perceived in two different ways. One the one hand, there is a normative approach which argues for the sacrality of the Holocaust as an ethical imperative – one ought to regard the Holocaust as sacred. Influential voices within this line of thinking are, for example, philosopher Emil Fackenheim (1916-2003) and writer Elie Wiesel (1928-2016), who argue that the Holocaust is part of sacred history. In his influential work on the Holocaust *God's Presence in History* (1970), Fackenheim argues that Jewish determination to survive *as Jews* despite the Holocaust demonstrates divine revelation (Fackenheim 1970, 3-34). Along similar lines, Wiesel is widely known for being an advocate of the idea that the Holocaust belongs to sacred history. He has argued that the Holocaust is as important as the revelation at Mount Sinai (Seidman 1996, 2), and opposes representations of the Holocaust in popular culture. As Peter Novick (1934-2012) argues, Wiesel's viewpoints of the Holocaust as a holy and uniquely inaccessible event deeply resonate in contemporary American culture (Novick 1999, 212).

These discourses of the Holocaust as sacred emerge from distinctly theological agendas. But to what extent and in which form do museums participate in such notions and constructions of the sacred? This brings us to the second, analytical way in which sacrality is understood with regard to the Holocaust. This approach asks how the sacred is constituted, authorized and perceived, and how notions of the sacred play a role in remembrance and representation. This approach yields particular merit in the present spatial analysis of Yad Vashem.

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have analyzed the public memory of the Holocaust as a civil religion. The sacred status attributed to particular Holocaust remains, such as the Anne Frank House as a 'shrine', Anne Frank's diary as a 'sacred text', and Anne Frank herself as a 'saint' (in Stengs 2023, 365), are indicative of the discourses of sacrality that have arisen around Holocaust memory.

Museums have often been considered as ritualistic and sacred spaces (Hansen-Glucklich 2014, 18). My analysis of religion at Yad Vashem leans towards a reflection upon Yad Vashem as a sacred space, or as a place where the sacred punctuates into the real world – as a hierophany (Eliade 1963). Yad Vashem's landscape abounds with transcendental motifs, marked by passageways, boundaries, and thresholds that visitors cross. These physical markers of separation in Yad Vashem's landscape are reinforced, as we saw, in the discourses of its officials. As David Chidester points out, anything can be sacralized "through the labour of interpretation and formal ritualization" (Chidester 2018, 4).

Ritualization has thus been conceptualized as a means of sacralization, facilitating encounters and intersections between the secular and the sacred (Balkenhol et al. 2020). While the present research does not deal with (claims to) secularity extensively, nor the religious-secular divide, the underlying dynamics of memory, the religious, and the sacred mutually informing each other and giving rise to new forms of sacrality (Meyer and de Witte 2013) do very much inform my research. Notions of the sacred, the religious, or the secular are part of my conceptual toolbox as much as they are objects of investigation themselves (Balkenhol et al. 2020, 2). In this, engaging with the sacred entails engaging with the secular. As Talal Asad points out, the secular is not opposed to the sacred. Rather, the secular: "[...] is neither continuous with the religious that supposedly preceded it (that is, it is not the latest phase of a sacred origin) nor a simple break from it (that is, it is not the opposite, an essence that excludes the sacred)" (Asad 2003: 25).

'The secular' thus functions not so much as a separation of the state and religion in this research. Rather, it is a term that guides a reflexive stance towards my own understanding of religious categories as distinctive from non-religious categories of inquiry, an ordering principle that brings together certain 'behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life' (Asad 2003, 24). As Saba Mahmood (1961-2018) argues, to make a distinction between the religious and the secular is in itself an operation of secularist (Protestant) ideology (Mahmood 2009, 87). In reiterating Mahmood, I do not mean to repeat a critique of secularity. Instead, her call points us to the fact that critical investigations of secularity are, indeed, critical investigations of the ideological biases and tendencies that have traditionally dominated religious studies.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter serves as an expansion of my methodological approach to Yad Vashem, in which I discuss storytelling to the backdrop of the 'narrative turn' in the social sciences beginning in the late 1980s. Through an analysis of leading work on storytelling, I reflect on the methodological implications of putting my positionality at the center of the present work, and deliberate what storytelling could do for religious studies. Coming from this, I discuss and problematize my understanding of 'religion' at Yad Vashem. The second and third chapter are empirical chapters, and comprise my spatial analysis. In the second chapter, I analyze the institution and museum of Yad Vashem in the framework of Holocaust memory. I situate Yad Vashem within contemporary debates on global, local, and 'glocal' Holocaust memory, and

subsequently situate Yad Vashem's monuments and architecture within the Israeli context, specifically with regards to Jerusalem's architectural makeup and Moshe Safdie's fingerprints on post-1967 Jerusalem. This chapter functions as a historical chapter in which I trace the changing memory of the Holocaust in Israel and its reflection in aesthetic representations of the Holocaust. In the third chapter, I put my boots on the ground and embark on one of Yad Vashem's pathways for a walk through a spatial story of Prophecy, Catastrophe, and Redemption. By following the body's course through Yad Vashem's spatial layout, I argue how Yad Vashem interweaves religious symbolism and motifs in its commemorative landscape and practices. In the fourth and concluding chapter, I put my findings in dialogue with Jewish voices on the sacredness of the Holocaust. This last chapter reflects on the implications of my findings for the discipline of religious studies, and ultimately argues for questioning the boundaries between religious studies and Holocaust studies.

Chapter I: 'The Homer of the Holocaust' – Storytelling in Yad Vashem and Reflexive Engagement

❝ If the Washington museum serves as the Holocaust's Thucydides, its historian, then the new Yad Vashem is its Homer, its poet and storyteller, enlivening the defining moments of a culture through the trials of individuals," said Andrea Oppenheimer, months after the spectacular inauguration of the new Yad Vashem museum in 2005 (Oppenheimer 2005). As I aimed to make clear in the introduction, the museum's new architecture and exhibition are strong in their emotional character. Indeed, both in its publications as well as in its online presence, Yad Vashem continuously stresses its goal to present a humane, emotion-driven (Harel 2010, 26), and individualized account of the Holocaust, presenting personal stories from survivors: "At the centre of the whole narrative is the individual," writes Avner Shalev, former Chairman and curator of Yad Vashem (Shalev 2006, 9).

Apart from the stories its walls tell, Yad Vashem is furthermore a place where the stories of its directors, curators, dozens of tour guides and thousands of visitors meet, harmonize, are retold, and contrast. People have described religious experiences on the museum grounds.[8] "It is amazing how after all this misery, the Jews have turned to messages of peace instead of revenge," a pastor tells me inside the museum. Sitting at the end of the Holocaust History Museum and talking with a visitor that had just gone through the exhibition, she says "I can only do so much..." An American passerby concludes "When you look at it, Germany is no bigger than Texas, really." Irrespective of quality, Yad Vashem stimulates conversation and deliberation. It is, in short, a place where stories are omnipresent.[9]

'Storytelling' is a primary concept for the present research, in which I set to find out what kind of stories Yad Vashem tells, how these stories are told, authorized and authenticated, and through which storytelling techniques. Specifically, I want to locate and get a firm grip on how 'religion', and the specific religious motifs that I touched upon in the introduction, figure within these modes of meaning-making, on the side of the museum itself as well as on the side of the visitors. Adding to this, I explore what it means for me to narrate these stories, how my own storytelling unfolds in this research, and what the theoretical implications of this kind of subjectivity are.

There exists little empirical data on the reception of narrative in Holocaust museums and memorials, and more specifically, no substantive fieldwork has been conducted on Yad Vashem from the perspective of religious studies. Thus, it is important to gain understanding into Yad Vashem's storytelling itself, as well as into the perception of these stories on the side of Yad Vashem's visitors. In this first chapter, I draw attention to the notion of 'storytelling' in its different forms, and expand upon my use of it. 'Storytelling' will inform the nature of the discussion in the chapters to come.

I begin with a brief overview of developments within narrative research over the past decades. Via the notions of 'storytelling' and 'narrative' I sketch out my understanding of the empirical field, specifically pertaining to issues of reflexivity. Consequently, I elaborate on these methodological reflections presenting my take on 'storytelling' in relation to my research findings, based primarily on the work of Arendt and Jackson's reconfiguration of Arendt's theory (Jackson

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[8] Interview with Avner Shalev, March 5 2023, Tel Aviv.
[9] All data in this research is based on my fieldwork unless indicated otherwise.

1989, 2008). Apart from a more straightforward understanding of the narrative of Yad Vashem as a 'story' and as 'storytelling', an understanding which is useful in itself and which figures prominently throughout the research, these terms stand within an academic tradition that directs us in our methodological orientation.

'Storytelling' is a useful concept for several reasons. Firstly, the workings within the concept of storytelling, revolving loosely around communication theory, have methodological bearings on the analysis of my data. Secondly and interrelatedly, 'storytelling' draws our attention to contemporary debates within religious studies and anthropology, respectively, concerning knowledge production, reflexivity, object/subject relations (Hazard 2013), and the dialectics between researcher and researched (Pasi 2008). Thirdly, the proximity between 'storytelling' and 'memory', a proximity upon which I expand in the second and fourth chapter, will prove for the concept to be instructive in the case of Yad Vashem.

At the same time, 'storytelling' does empirical work as well. Apart from being a method, narrative, stories and storytelling are observable phenomena, and "life is pregnant with stories" (Kearney 2002, 130). So too is Yad Vashem. Both in written form, as well as orally and physically, Yad Vashem has a rich archive in which it talks about itself, in which it narrates itself. A study of this sheds light on how Yad Vashem perceives itself. This self-narration of course particularly holds true in the museum context, which is characterized by the communication of a particular narrative, or modes of storytelling (Bedford 2001, 28). Coming back to Oppenheimer's description of Yad Vashem as the Holocaust's poet and storyteller, as the Holocaust's Homer, important to note is that a contrast is presupposed between a historical narration of the Holocaust on the one hand, and an emotional, storied narration of the Holocaust on the other. As we will see in the coming chapters, these two strata of narration are deeply interwoven in Yad Vashem, but a good question to keep in mind is: what constitutes the difference between a history and a story?

Turning to Narrative – 'How can it be Described?'

Before turning to Yad Vashem's storytelling, it proves instructive to briefly revisit how 'storytelling', or 'narrative', has been debated in the academic arena over the past few decades. Importantly, contemporary theorization around narrative, specifically around the social quality and dimensions of narrative, enables a reflexive attitude on behalf of the researcher, and thus informs my methodological positioning. In a compelling text, sociologist Patrick Lewis asks why there cannot be more storytelling in academic research, and if it is possible for the researcher to become a storyteller (Lewis 2011, 506). Lewis contrasts information with stories, based on the work of Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), who argues that "a story is different. It does not expand itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time" (Benjamin 1973, 90). Although I contend that the premise of Lewis' question is misleading, as I explain below, his aim of bringing research into meaningful dialogue with storytelling and vice versa is important.

Over the last decades, the social sciences have seen a tremendous rise in the attention given to 'narrative' (Polletta et al. 2011, 110). Beginning in the 1980s and pitted against positivistic and structuralist academic agendas, social science has shown an increased attention towards individual or group narrative (Goodson and Gill 2011, 31). Narrative was not entirely new to academia, where it had been a topic of discussion within the social sciences before, predominantly in the

context of interactionist studies (Polletta et al. 2011, 112). After the 1980s however, the angle from which narrative was studied significantly changed, where philosophers and social scientists came to see that narrative or stories exerted force in the world, that they were not merely told but also lived (Ricœur 1984; Polkinghorne 1988; McAdams 1993). In contrast to positivistic "desires to explain and to theorize" (Bamberg 2007, 3), the 'narrative turn' worked to reconfigure the understanding of relationships between narrative and the self, other, community, political and social (Polletta et al. 2011). Importantly, this shifting understanding of narrative, from merely active and functional *in* social reality towards constitutive *of* social reality, in fact has reflexive implications.

How does narrative bear on reflexivity? Within social sciences, narrative-based research has been described as an intersection between historical and biographical writing (Polletta et al. 2011, 110), as an overlap with autoethnography (Bochner and Ellis 1992), and, more broadly, as a qualitative mode of inquiry that aims at 'open understanding' as opposed to positivistic or structuralist truth claims (Denzin 1997). Narrative or storytelling can both be seen as a phenomenon as well as a method of inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly 2000), although the two work in tandem as I show below. Studied as a phenomenon, 'narrative research', as an umbrella term, departs from the understanding that human life is inherently storied life (Kearney 2002, 130). Stories are traceable, tangible things. When approached as a method of inquiry, however, narrative or storytelling invokes a reflexive turn inwards. This is because 'narrative' carries a social process of sense-making and self-positioning within it.

Our narration of events, our stories, do not correspond to reality. No story is simply an imitation of events as they occurred (Berger 1979, 9). Life is too complex to put into words, and to a large extent, eludes language (Van de Port 2010). Every narration is thus the result of a process of sense-making, or meaning-making. Jackson notes that narrative works at what he calls a 'protolinguistic' level, changing our *experience* of events by restructuring them (Jackson 2008, 35). Storytelling, as a process, can be understood as an experiencing of a previous experience. A story, as a result, can thus be understood as an experience of an experience. In this sense, stories indeed are lived, but also form life.

Lived experience, writes Jackson, "accommodates our shifting sense of ourselves as subjects and as objects, as acting upon and being acted upon by the world, of living with and without certainty, of belonging and being estranged" (Jackson 1989, 2). This acknowledgment of our 'shifting senses' of ourselves as both 'objects and subjects' encourages an epistemological openness. Based on the work of William James (1842-1910), Jackson has further developed the concept of 'radical empiricism', as a methodology in which "we make ourselves experimental subjects and treat our experiences as primary data" (Jackson 1989, 4). James initially coined the term 'radical empiricism' to theorize that experience includes both transitive and substantive elements (James 1976).

Traditional empiricism relies on a set boundary between the researcher and the researched, between a method and an object (Hazard 2013). Radical empiricism, for Jackson, denies this split and instead makes the *interplay* between these different domains, between self and other, between object and subject, the focus of interest (Jackson 1989, 3). To have our focus on interplay is methodologically important in discussing ethnography. This focus is a means of taking reflexivity seriously (Bochner and Ellis 1992, 170). It allows us to not only acknowledge our positionality, but to actively work with it, and to bring lived experience into the center of research.

There are reflexive qualities for communicative experience regarding the considerations of the researcher. The empirical field is, coming from Jackson's radical empiricism, one of interactions and intersubjectivity (Jackson 1989, 4). The social quality of the empirical field and indeed, the social quality of data, dissolves any Cartesian split between object and subject, between self and other. This reconfiguration of boundaries and binaries that 'storytelling' thus allows for puts 'storytelling' in dialogue with a much larger academic project of moving away from Cartesian splits and, in the case of 'spatial storytelling', anthropocentric worldviews (Hodder 2014, Hazard 2013). I will specify my discussion to the confines of religious studies.

When I am telling a story or reporting on information, like I am doing now, I am eliciting my own potential for meaning making, thereby taking part in the production of knowledge. The reflexive qualities that Bochner and Ellis talk about concerning communicative experience or research, together with the social quality, point to the fact there is no stable phenomenon 'out there' called religion. In fact, our field of study is characterized by a 'dialectic relationship' (Pasi 2008, 4) of knowledge production between the researcher and the researched. Richard King points to the fact that the object of study is created *within* its study and does not exist a priori to it (King 2017, 5). These dialectics between researcher and researched result in research findings within which, by definition, more than one worldview reside.

These considerations are prevailing themes within critical religious studies after the 'Copernican Turn' (King 2017, 4). King stipulates the outcome of the relation between critical theory "that seeks to locate itself and others in a network of cultural, epistemological, and political networks" (King 2017, 6), and empirical data. Kocku von Stuckrad characterizes the attitude that follows from this as 'recursive contingency': "Reflexive critique is more than mere critique of ideology. It takes seriously what I call the recursion of contingency, because this method is ready continuously to call into question the very ground on which it stands" (Von Stuckrad 2003, 268). Thus, my findings are the result of interaction between inquirer and inquired (Knibbe and Droogers 2011, 299), and my method literally yields my data (Stausberg and Engler 2011, 9-10). We delve deeper into the nuances to this claim when discussing 'religion' below.

Kissing Travelers, Taking Walks, and the 'Narrative Imperative'

In *The Human Condition* (1958) Hannah Arendt argues that storytelling is never just a matter of creating personal or social meanings, but always part of what she calls a 'subjective-in-between', in which a multiplicity of interests gather and coopt (Arendt 1958, 182-184). Although Arendt's analytical interest in writing this work, in which she draws distinctions between labor, work, and action, was quite different from our present purposes, her observations are nevertheless of key importance. For, according to Jackson, "behind Arendt's approach lies an unspoken ontological assumption that our individual humanity always has extension in space and time" (Jackson 2008, 32). Jackson alerts us here to the material character of storytelling.

According to Arendt, every human subject is at once a 'who' and a 'what': at once an active participant in the making of its world, and one that is subjected to actions by others (Arendt 1958, 181-188). In this, Arendt's words echo on in Jackson's earlier comment on lived experience. Jackson revisits Arendt's observations, viewing storytelling as "a vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances" (Jackson 2008, 34). The two authors significantly relate to each other in that Arendt discusses storytelling mainly within a social realm, while Jackson treats storytelling from the perspective of the individual.

Like others, Jackson attaches a necessity to storytelling, describing narrative and storytelling as an imperative for human survival (Jackson 2008, 35). American writer Joan Didion (1934-2021) says that "we tell stories in order to live" (Didion 1979, 11). Stories convey order and structure in our lives. Whereas Arendt discusses storytelling mainly as a social phenomenon, Jackson adds that at the same time, storytelling is also what makes individuality possible, saying that "while storytelling makes sociality possible, it is equally vital to the illusory, self-protective, self-justifying activity of individual minds" (Jackson 2008, 34). Jackson perceives storytelling as a coping mechanism that offers individuals a sense of agency in the face of a reality that is in fact far beyond their grasp: "Storytelling reworks and remodels subject-object relations in ways that subtly alter the balance between actor and acted upon, thus allowing us to feel that we actively participate in a world that for a moment seemed to discount, demean, and disempower us" (Jackson 2008, 35).

Coming back to the social quality we ascribed to communication above, we come to see that even telling a personal story is essentially social for its 'coping strategies' (Langellier 1989, 264), 'coping' here pertaining to an act of sense-making. Instructive is then to see how meaning is constructed within the discrepancy of what is lived and what is told. Storytelling therefore alludes to a social *act* of meaning-making, whereas the story itself is the result of this social process. The task of the researcher could be to interrogate the processes of meaning-making and orientation caught up in the construction of a narrative or a story. Storytelling mediates the relation between us and the world beyond us.

Life is not synonymous with story, as noted above. Our lives are unsayable, only plotted in our minds. It is what Michel de Certeau calls 'the immense remainder' (De Certeau 1984, 61). However, popular phrases like 'life is a story', 'you are your story', or 'stories are lived before they are told,' all depart from a presupposed harmony between the life and the story, a harmony such as the division between a beginning, a middle, and an ending. But to assume this harmony would be uncritical. Taking bad intentions such as lying or manipulation aside, storytelling, as a process, is always a *recollection*. No story is an imitation of events as they occurred. In this, there is a proximity to memory: telling a story is an act of memory, or gives rise to memory. Karen Blixen (1885-1962) puts it provokingly when she says: "All sorrows can be borne if you can put them into a story or tell a story about them" (in Arendt 1973, 6).

Writer Lorrie Moore goes to the heart of this issue of narration in a short story she wrote about a mother whose child is dying. Struggling to come to terms with the disastrous reality that she is now facing, the woman's husband advises her to write down her experiences. The mother in fact is a writer herself. Seeking refuge in narrative, the mother grows contemptuous of it. She recognizes the sheer disruption of reality that her narration of it entails. Moore's appreciation of narrative is instructive to be quoted here at length:

How can it be described? How can any of it be described? The trip and the story of the trip are always two different things. The narrator is the one who has stayed home, but then, afterward, presses her mouth upon the traveler's mouth, in order to make the mouth work, to make the mouth say, say, say. One cannot go to a place and speak of it; one cannot both see and say, not really. One can go, and upon returning make a lot of hand motions and indications with the arms. The mouth itself, working at the speed of light, at the eye's instructions, is necessarily stuck still; so fast, so much to report, it hangs open and dumb as a gutted bell. All that unsayable life! That's where the narrator comes in. The narrator comes with her kisses and mimicry and tidying up. The narrator comes and makes a slow, fake song of the mouth's eager devastation (Moore 1998, 237).

Neither are stories purely personal, they are social as we saw above. At the same time, however, they are not only social, because stories allow us to position ourselves, and to sense peace of mind. Taking into account this dual quality of storytelling, we see that stories, like memories or dreams, are nowhere articulated as purely personal phenomena, but are authored, edited, and authorized dialogically in the course of sharing recollections with others.

Coming back to Lewis' question about whether the researcher could become a storyteller, the discussion above thus points to the flawed premise of the question. Whereas Lewis supposes some kind of distinction between the two, through Jackson's notion of 'radical empiricism' we saw how any structuring of information by definition carries within it the social mechanisms of narrative and storytelling. Lewis' question can thus be said to depart from a traditional empiricist mode of thought. What I argued above however, is that with any kind of engagement in the empirical field, the researcher presses his mouth upon the traveler's mouth. This interplay, this meeting point, this kiss, is what we interrogate.

During my walks on the Yad Vashem grounds with my interlocutors, I encountered this interplay on multiple levels, and became aware of the reciprocity that characterized our walks. In the one month that I was permitted to be in Israel, I went to the museum about ten times, four of which were walks with my tourist interlocutors, two of which were guided tours, and roughly four of which were individual visits. Reading back from my fieldnotes, after several of my individual visits, which were spread out over the rest of the visits, I was convinced that I had seen what was to be seen, and that I could move on from on-site visits. Walking with my interlocutors, however, every single time I felt that the empirical field burst open again, that I was exploring and experiencing again, and that in reciprocal directions, knowledge was gained.

With all my interlocutors, our visit to Yad Vashem was part of a full day that we spent together. Every time, we would take the light train from my house in Mea Shearim and get off at Mount Herzl. From there we would walk the remaining ten minutes, through the fresh pine forest on Har ha-Zikaron, onto the museum grounds. We would show our reservations at the counter, and walk over the *Bridge to a Vanished World* into the Holocaust History Museum. Having gone through the museum either together, separately, or something in between, we would reconvene at the end of the Holocaust History Museum, next to the *Bridge to Life*. From there, we walked past the synagogue, over the *Valley of the Righteous Among the Nations*, back to the piazza. With all my interlocutors I then sat down on the same bench overlooking the hills of West-Jerusalem. Casually, we would start conversating about our experiences of the visit, smoking cigarettes, chewing on dates or having a cold drink, while enjoying the sunset over Jerusalem.

As orchestrated and symphonic as this might sound, the rhythms and harmonies of my fieldwork were disturbed on many occasions. This disturbance, or interplay, proves instructive. On my first walk with Ruth, in walking I had to orient, or steer, her many times. Like with all of my interlocutors, disoriented by the landscape, she immediately took the 'wrong' way as soon as we got out of the light train. Several times I had to steer her into the 'right' direction. With every walk, the day would be characterized, naturally perhaps, by wrong turns, by misunderstandings, awkward anticipations, atonality.

My interlocutors knew that I had been to Yad Vashem before, and so there was an asymmetry in our knowledge of the place. With all my tourist interlocutors, this asymmetry was inevitable. Although all of my interlocutors were motivated to go to Yad Vashem regardless of me, every shared walk felt like I was taking them out. I brought dates, sandwiches or cigarettes, and I bought them a drink afterwards. Concerning Jackson's discussion on interaction, intersubjectivity and interplay, I contend that although we are part of the same empirical and experiential field, we occupy vastly different positions within this field. Whereas prior to these walks I had deliberated how to keep the research environment clean for my interlocutors, how to enable them to experience Yad Vashem in an unadulterated way, by virtue of my presence I was in fact polluting their experiences from the start.

At the same time, the sheer presence of my interlocutors, let alone their stories, reflected back onto me: by virtue of their presence, I engaged with the space of Yad Vashem differently. Struggling over how to position myself when observing my interlocutors' movements, wondering how not to be too obvious or too 'unnatural', I continuously made choices on how to move: to stand next to them and together look at artifacts, to walk away from them completely, to be silent, or talkative. Standing next to Ruth in the first historical room of the museum, she pointed me to something I had not seen before, a Nazi board game called 'Juden Raus!' (*Out with the Jews*). The board game shows a walled town, through which the players move to round up Jews and deposit them outside the city walls, where a slogan reads 'Auf nach Palästina!' (*Off to Palestine!*).

Ruth thus redirected my gaze towards something new, and contributed to my knowledge, my narrative, my story of Yad Vashem. Similarly, on my walk with Indie, our pace was not in sync. I walked fast, she walked slow, and consequently I lost her in the middle of the museum, in the exhibition of the Warsaw Ghetto. Having been in that exhibition multiple times before by that time, I became bored and annoyed. I lowered my tired head and was attracted to a video installation I had not seen before, depicting gruesome images from the Warsaw Ghetto. Emotionally stirred by what I saw, I regained an energy to engage with the emotionally demanding exhibitions. What these two examples show is that, on multiple levels, there was a reciprocity, an interplay, between my interlocutors and me. These examples further point to the pivotal role of the (social) body in engaging with the museum. We return to the body and the social body in the third chapter.

So too was the interplay obvious in the interviews we held afterwards. They were semi-structured, and seeing as the setting was informal every time, the talks we had were very free. Every single time, sharing our experiences of Yad Vashem inevitably led to other topics, related conversations. With my different interlocutors, the nature of the talks were different, and so too was my part within them. No one steps into the same river twice. At times introducing my questions to them with personal anecdotes and at other times not, I realized that I was telling stories of how I had perceived the museum, that my stories were different every time, and that I

carried the rhythm to all the interviews. Both in the walks, as well as in the interviews, I found myself to be the director.

At the same time, my month in Israel was characterized by a strong continuity and by repetitive forces. Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) held that "repetition and recollection are the same movement, except in opposite directions, for what is recollected has been, is repeated backward, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward" (Kierkegaard 1983 [1842], 131). Regarding the interviews, what this means is that at once, with telling how I had experienced Yad Vashem, I was recollecting, or repeating backwards, but at the same time, in the larger arc of the ethnography and my time in Israel, with my repeated visits and with my repeated walks and interviews, I was repeating this recollection. This is an important nuance to the discussion thus far, which points us to the element of performance. On the one hand, stories do not mimic reality, but on the other, this process of storytelling is very much present within reality, and retraceable within it.

Like museum tour guides, so too was I performing the visits to Yad Vashem. The above discussion makes it clear that there was a rhythm to my visits and to my ethnographical fieldwork. As I visited Yad Vashem more often, I slowly started to get a sense of the rhythms within which I found myself – the rhythms of the space, the rhythms of the tour guides, and the rhythms of my fellow visitors. Finding myself in the same audiovisual plethora so many times, halfway through my month in Israel, walking through Yad Vashem, it appeared to me as if I was dreaming, or having a déjà vu.

For the argument that I am advancing concerning storytelling, and, specifically, spatial storytelling, I need to be comprehensive in my approach and in the different aspects of Yad Vashem's spatial storytelling, including the body, space, and text. For now, we keep expanding on storytelling, and take a closer look at Yad Vashem's stories and storytelling, specifically regarding 'religion'.

My Changing Story of Yad Vashem and Searching for Religion

The first time I went to Yad Vashem was in the summer of 2019. Back then, the museum made a particular impression on me. Coming out of the Holocaust History Museum, I was upset and disoriented, but at the same time I situated myself fast. It was clear for me where I was: a political place, one that, via the memory of the Holocaust, took part in the erasure of Palestine. Most importantly for me back then, the museum Zionized the memory of the Holocaust. Inspired to take up intellectual arms, I wrote a passionate story about my thoughts, in which I was concerned with how the museum made the memory of the Holocaust part of a Zionist political narrative of destruction and redemption (Dijkstra 2022).

Looking back on this very first visit at the time of writing this research, the moment where I walked out onto the viewers' balcony at the end of the Holocaust History Museum might have been a moment in which reality was outside my grasp, in which the world 'seemed to discount, demean and disempower' me, to phrase it in Jackson's terms. Walking back to the piazza and starting to narrate my experience, I reasserted myself as an active participant in this world. I made up my mind and started plotting my story.

My story of Yad Vashem has changed since then. Like Reynolds points out and like I have tried to make clear in the introductory chapter, there are several layers of redemption simultaneously at work in Yad Vashem (Reynolds 2018, 177). The fact that Yad Vashem

'Zionizes' the memory of the Holocaust is evident and, in fact, is made explicit in Yad Vashem's publications. In talking about the new museum, curator Joan Ockman says:

> Here [the museum] commences a harrowing but unapologetically affirmative journey that recounts the history of the Holocaust from its origins in the vibrant, culturally rich Jewish communities of Europe through to its grand finale – not in the 'solution' of the Nazi death camps, as at places of Holocaust memorialization in Europe and the United States, but rather in a redemptive and triumphal Zionist 'homecoming' (Ockman 2006, 20).

Coming from the above discussion, the point of interest in Yad Vashem is rather in the construction, authorization, and authentication of its commemorative practices, and specifically, how religion figures within these practices.

In the introduction, we have touched upon the omnipresence of religious motifs and symbolism in Yad Vashem. Our discussion about 'storytelling' and the interactive nature of the empirical field, consequently, allows us to examine the concept of 'religion' itself. Not only does the discussion above point to the ideological nature of a conception of 'religion' as something set apart from non-religious things (Pasi 2008), it also points to my own preconceived ideas and ideological biases that I bring to the table in discussing Yad Vashem and religion. Four years ago, the immediate thought I had was that religion was being *instrumentalized* in Yad Vashem, that religion was being *appropriated* for the Zionist purposes that I thought to be the important issue for scholarly inquiry. Four years on, however, I am still convinced that religion occupies a distinctive position within Yad Vashem's commemorative practices.

But religion is by no means a given, a phenomenon 'out there' to be observed for everyone at Yad Vashem. Talking to the current Chairman of Yad Vashem Dani Dayan, he stressed that Yad Vashem is by no means religious. He pointed to the contradictory understandings of the religious during the time of the Holocaust: "One of the questions I get asked a lot is what the lessons from the Shoah [Holocaust] are. These lessons are innumerable and contradictory. For some, the Shoah has taught them that they should dedicate this life to God. Others have learned that God does not exist."[10] At the same time, Dayan describes Yad Vashem as a sacred place, and although he describes himself as a secularist, Dayan has stated that Zionism is his religion.[11] Similarly, Shalev mentions how 'informal research' has been conducted on religion at Yad Vashem, but that 'nothing was found'.[12] Like Dayan, Shalev blurs the dividing lines between religious and non-religious when he says that "Yad Vashem is not a religious place. Religion is deep in our identity however. The Zionist movement was totally antireligious, but in the end, they were religious anyways."[13]

This re-essentialization position towards 'religion' as culture or identity, on behalf of Dayan and Shalev are instructive in itself. Clearly, we had different ideas about 'religion' in our minds. It gets more ambiguous when the conversation came to the different Bible passages that figure prominently in the landscape of Yad Vashem. When I ask Shalev about the decision-making

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[10] Interview with Dani Dayan, March 1 2023, Jerusalem.
[11] Etan Nechim, "Dani Dayan's Appointment Is the Final Step Toward Politicizing Yad Vashem," in *Haaretz*. Published August 21, 2021,
Dani Dayan's Appointment Is the Final Step Toward Politicizing Yad Vashem - Israel News - Haaretz.com
[12] Interview with Avner Shalev, March 5 2023, Tel Aviv.
[13] Interview with Avner Shalev, March 5 2023, Tel Aviv.

process of placing these passages, he replies that the placement 'came naturally,' and that they did not have to place them 'artificially'. Dayan, who passes numerous of these passages every day on his way to work, nevertheless says that he 'never gave them a serious thought.'[14] Dayan does stress that "these Jewish sources are part of the cultural essence of Israel."[15] My tour guide Zara similarly pointed to the arbitrariness of the placement of these Bible passages, adding with a wink that "it is probably about money."[16]

As I argue here, Yad Vashem's discourse around religion can be understood within a 'religion as culture' paradigm. The officials at Yad Vashem make claims to religion as being embedded within the national self-understanding of Israel: incorporating all these religious motifs went 'natural' for them. Supposedly, there was no deliberation in the placement or selection of these motifs. Whereas I was drawn to religion at Yad Vashem as something on its own right and with a particular function within it, my interlocutors working within Yad Vashem, the chairman, the curator, and the tour guide, essentially downplay these religious motifs *as* religious motifs in and around the museum, stressing the cultural importance of these things, and even the arbitrariness of their deployment.

What to do with these claims about the absence of religion *as* religion at Yad Vashem? The way in which Yad Vashem's officials speak about it, they turn my research interest into a deadlock. However, throughout this research, I do not engage with religion in the sense of religion as belief and practice. My interest in religion, with regard to the discipline of religious studies, is much more informed by a 'religion as heritage' paradigm. The distinction between these two paradigms, developed by Lehmann (2013), is of course not watertight.

It is important to draw attention to the assumption within statements that these religious motifs and religious texts are deep inside an Israeli essence, and that therefore these texts and motifs are part of a *cultural heritage*. I discuss this exclusively in the museum context. Doing this will also be the first step in theorizing around Yad Vashem within its Israeli topography, and of how Yad Vashem deals with changes in Holocaust memory. Several sociologists have shown how societies have been forced to renegotiate their understandings of nationhood and national identity as a consequence of deepening diversity (Joppke 1999). This holds equally true for Israel, and Yad Vashem by extension.

Marian Burchardt notes that the role of religion in museums narrating national history has been largely understudied, but he points to the fact that museums have an important function in canonizing religion as national memory (Burchardt 2020, 177). In recent decades, museums have been increasingly been called upon for their political legacies (Breckenridge 1989). Viewed as 'memoryscapes' (Bender 1993, 3), increased scholarly attention has been given to the links between museums, migration and diversity, treating museums as sites where national imageries emerge in response to national changes. A museum reflects a society. Levitt explores how museums define and enact national culture and diversity, examining the interaction between cultural politics and museum practice (Levitt 2015, 139).

Burchardt has expanded upon the prevailing notion of 'heritage religion' (Burchardt 2020, 157), to describe a form of religion that has emerged as a consequence of secularization and religious diversification. Based primarily on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'assemblage'

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[14] Interview with Dani Dayan, March 15 2023, Jerusalem.
[15] Interview with Dani Dayan, March 15 2023, Jerusalem.
[16] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1988), Burchardt proposes the concept of 'religious heritage assemblage' as "the totality of the heterogeneous discourses, sites, and practices in which claims to religion as (national) culture are articulated, authorized, and institutionalized" (Burchardt 2020, 159). He argues that religious heritage is (1) mobilized by ordinary people as an affective politics of belonging; (2) aesthetically and semantically elaborated by institutions such as the museum that canonize its status as official national memory; and (3) politically institutionalized with power relationships in order to secure cultural hegemonies and as part of a politics of citizenship.

We have to furtherly add to this that 'religion', in whatever form, is present in a particular setting in Yad Vashem. Whereas Yad Vashem has commemoration purposes, at the same time it aims to attract visitors. This dual objective, of presenting the horrors of the Holocaust in an attractive environment for visitors, has been termed 'dissonant heritage' (Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996). Social geographer Shaul Krakover argues that dissonant heritage forms a dilemma for Yad Vashem, and he discusses the 'dissonance-softening policies' that Yad Vashem employs to deal with this, important ones being advancing narratives of social cohesion and heroism (Krakover 2002, 360). Although we will not touch upon this until later, it is good to take in mind that the religious texts that we have seen earlier might figure in dissonance-softening strategies. We are alluded to the connection between the location of religion and new media and globalizing currents (Meyer and Moors 2006). For, as Burchardt notes, "despite its particularistic origins, heritage religion stands above and transcends the divergent religious affiliations of national populations and becomes a unifying national symbol" (Burchardt 2020, 195).

Heritage, and heritage religion, are thus important concepts for this research. In the arguments from Yad Vashem's officials on the absence of religion *as* religion, 'heritage religion' provides us with the preliminary means of understanding how the religious is, or functions as, a social reality in Yad Vashem's network of relations (Meyer et al. 2010, 209). Subsequently, we are invited to ask how this social reality is put into practice within the epistemological and aesthetic paradigms that organize the bodily experience of things. The spatial analysis in the second and third chapter will thus add material or spatial weight to these arguments on the location of religion in Yad Vashem. Adding, our spatial analysis further provides us with the means of accommodating emic perspectives in our analysis.

'Religion' is perceived as something embedded within Israeli consciousness, according to some of my interlocutors at Yad Vashem. I was made aware of this actuality of religion, or God, in Jewish consciousness, in a moment of conflict and clarity at the beginning of my fieldwork. After my tour with Avram, we discussed what we had seen in the exhibition. The days before that, I had been reading vehemently about religion in the Holocaust, and I was holding on to my intellectual armor that day. Confidently I said to Avram how fascinating it was to see how theological ideas were appropriated so differently in different parts of the community. His reply to me back then urges us to take the 'religion as culture' paradigm seriously. He said that I should be careful to use the word 'appropriate', because "one should understand the sincerity with which these people were trying to comprehend what God meant in these times."[17]

These arguments point to an emic understanding of religion that is, often, at odds with an etic one. The discussion over the word 'appropriation' in the context of religion points to a complexity within religion studies, where we analyze 'religion' as a constructed phenomenon, whereas

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[17] Interview with Avram, March 11 2023, Jerusalem.

religion is not *lived* or *experienced* as a construction by believers. This tension, between emic and etic conceptions of religion, of course, complicates the present discussion.

In the next chapter, we will position Yad Vashem into a tradition of Holocaust remembrance, both internationally and within Israel. We will see how Yad Vashem relates to this, and what the particularities of Yad Vashem's challenges are. Simultaneously, I look at how Yad Vashem figures in larger stories of Holocaust remembrance and the Israeli national community.

Concluding Remarks

In unpacking the notion of 'storytelling', in this chapter I expanded upon my methodological approach in locating religion in Yad Vashem. 'Storytelling' is a layered concept. Yad Vashem, described as the Homer of the Holocaust, is pregnant with stories of different kinds. So too does the museum use specific storytelling techniques in its artifactual displays to provide the visitor with an experiential, emotion-driven, visit to Yad Vashem. Stories, as observable phenomena, are omnipresent in Yad Vashem.

The academic tradition in which storytelling, as a social process, stands, alerts us the dialectic nature of knowledge production. The 'narrative turn' in the social sciences has pulled the focus of inquiry inward, to an understanding of how the self, the other, and the community are continuously negotiated through storytelling. Arendt and Jackson have alerted us to how storytelling carries within in the mechanisms that make sociality possible, and at the same time provides a 'coping mechanism' for the individual to position and assert himself in the world. Following from this, storytelling calls into question empiricist modes of inquiry that rest on an opposition between the researcher and the researched, instead pointing to the dialectic nature of knowledge production. We have seen how the recognition of storytelling's social mechanisms troubles presupposed boundaries between self and other, between object and subject, and between researcher and researched. The concept therefor aligns with contemporary modes of thought which move away from Cartesian understandings of the world.

In this sense, storytelling bears on reflexivity, and requires one to bring their positionality to the center of their research. I have reflected the methodological discussion onto my ethnography, highlighting how the concept of 'religion' itself is negotiated between emic and etic perspectives. Specifically, we have seen how religion *as* religion is perceived to be absent at Yad Vashem by its officials, whereas I signal a distinctive presence of religion. Provisionally, I offered 'heritage religion' as a tool to conceptualize the voices of Yad Vashem that ascribe a cultural or even natural quality to religious motifs in Yad Vashem. In the coming chapters, we explore how spatial analysis further assists in understanding the interface of religion and Holocaust memory, empirically as well as conceptually.

Chapter II: The Texture of Memory – Building a Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem

Where in the last chapter we laid a methodological foundation to this research, and where I expanded upon my use of 'storytelling' in discussing my research findings, in this chapter we enter through the gates of Yad Vashem itself. We discuss the institution and the museum in the framework of Holocaust memory. I situate and problematize Yad Vashem within contemporary debates on Holocaust remembrance, specifically revolving around the notions of 'global Holocaust memory', 'nativization of Holocaust memory', and 'glocal memory'. This leads to an analysis of the spatial genealogy of Yad Vashem itself.

Overarching this analysis is the question of how Holocaust memory discourses are produced, authorized, and authenticated in Yad Vashem, and how specific narratives of Holocaust commemoration are reflected within its architectural landscape. Inevitably, we strike a balance between continuities and discontinuities displayed in Yad Vashem. Yad Vashem hovers between both global memory regimes on the one hand, and a specifically Israeli typography on the other. Importantly, we see how these two forces, global and local, are in constant dialogue with each other, and dependent upon historical developments in memory culture. We see this reflected in Yad Vashem's institutional strategies, in its architecture, and in its exhibitions.

As the first part of our spatial analysis of Yad Vashem, this chapter draws attention to the different ways in which Holocaust memory is spatialized in Yad Vashem. I argue that this spatialization of Holocaust memory is to be understood as the result of an interplay between a changing memory culture within Israel on the one hand, and internationalizing trends within Holocaust memory on the other.

Yad Vashem relates to and interacts with other Holocaust museums around the world. In putting Yad Vashem on par with other Holocaust museums, I relate it to a multiplicity of museums around the world, for we will see how Yad Vashem can be placed within different traditions of Holocaust museums. Described as one of the four 'shrines' of Holocaust memorialization (Goldberg 2012, 190), Yad Vashem, together with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington D.C., the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, and Auschwitz Birkenau itself, is a place invested with substantial authority in international Holocaust commemoration. Comparing Yad Vashem to, or brining it into dialogue with, other places of Holocaust memorialization is useful in that it allows us to see how the institution and the museum fit within contemporary commemorative paradigms observable around the world (Bickford and Sodaro 2010). In recent years, authors have theorized about 'the internationalization of Holocaust memory', framing Holocaust memory as 'global memory' (Levy and Sznaider 2006).

At the same time, we should not lose sight of Yad Vashem on its own terms. Isabel Wollaston has signaled a 'nativization' of the Holocaust, referring to the trend that "memorials and museums, and discussion of issues relating to the Holocaust, take particular forms and have particular emphases depending upon their national context" (Wollaston 2001, 507). Similarly, in his seminar work on Holocaust memorialization, based on studies in Austria, Poland, Germany, Israel, and America, Young notes that "national memory of [...] the *Shoah* varies from land to

land," and that "in every nation's memorials and museums, a different Holocaust is remembered, often to conflicting political and religious ends" (Young 1993, viii-ix).

In the first chapter we saw how museums, viewed as memoryscapes, stand in particular and dynamic relation to their home country. Following the analysis of Yad Vashem in its international environment, I explore the relation between Yad Vashem and Israeli society from two angles in this chapter. Firstly, I trace Yad Vashem's Israeli lineage as an architectural phenomenon, and analyze how Yad Vashem fits into architectural changes in Jerusalem commencing in the 1960s. Secondly and interrelatedly, we enter the museum and see how the exhibitions reflect issues of diversity and representation, paying attention to Yad Vashem's curatorial and museological concepts and objectives.

Global, Local, and 'Glocal' Memory: 'The Jewish Perspective' of Yad Vashem

As suggested by a variety of scholars, in the last decades Holocaust memory has become paradigmatic to a new form of collective memory, also described as 'global memory' (Levy and Sznaider 2006). Levy and Sznaider argue the Holocaust has come as a means to establish an imagined community around its memory. Although others are skeptical over the term 'global memory' in their critique of globalization, the dissemination of Holocaust memory around the globe as a significant historical and ethical event is hard to deny. Both in the institutional sphere as well as in specific commemorative paradigms, strategies, and practices, we can see how the memory of the Holocaust exerts substantial force.

Memory scholar Esther Romeyn is one among many who describes the memory of the Holocaust as the foundational event of Europe (Romeyn 2014, 79), a position which is frequently echoed by European, American, and Israeli political leaders (Klug 2020). Israeli historian Alon Confino has even argued that the Holocaust replaced the French Revolution as the 'foundational myth' of the West (Confino 2011), a claim that is reverberated in different contexts.

In a similar vein, historian Tony Judt (1948-2010) describes how the memory of the Holocaust has, invertedly, come to provide a moral beacon for a new, post-war Europe (Judt 2005). In the late 1990s, a Dutch researcher even openly stipulated about building a collective European identity around the memory of the Holocaust (Pijpers 2006, 126). Historians have argued that the increased interest in the Holocaust in the second half of the 20th century has to be seen in light of the reconfigurations of national or transnational identity that characterized post-Cold War Europe.

In Europe, the fall of the Soviet Union and the integration of formerly Soviet states into a European collectivity gave rise to a search for a new uniting identity (Banks 2009, 5), after which European states explicitly started to gather around a shared Holocaust guilt (Diner and Golb 1997, 303). In Israel itself, the trial of Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962) served as the catalyzer of what has been called the Israeli 'nationalization of the Holocaust' (Weitz 2009, 45), which made the memory of the Holocaust a hallmark in Israeli national identity (Arendt 1963, 60). I discuss the Israeli case below.

The seemingly paradigmatic status of Holocaust memory is reverberated within the legal and moral realm. John Torpey and Elazar Barkan, for example, have shown how regulations of financial compensation and restitution, which were initially established for Holocaust victims, were quickly reproduced in other historical contexts (Barkan 2000; Torpey 2006). Historian Amos Goldberg argues that the Holocaust has "served as a standard and as juridical basis for

claims to justice, recognition and monetary compensation, not only in the 'Euro-Atlantic' space [...] but far beyond it" (Goldberg 2012, 188).

The global outreach of Holocaust memory is also observable on the institutional level. The importance of Holocaust memory, and countries' official commitment to Holocaust memory, is becoming increasingly embedded within international institutions and organizations. A prime example of the global institutionalization of Holocaust memory is the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), established in 1998 by the former prime minister of Sweden, Göran Persson. In 2000, the IHRA's then 28 member states signed the Stockholm Declaration, formerly committing themselves to Holocaust commemoration,[18] and, according to Banks, uniting a European collectivity around the idea of a *shared* history of genocide (Banks 2009, 7). In January 2020, on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, ministers of 34 IHRA member states renewed their commitment to Holocaust commemoration in an amended version of the Stockholm Declaration.[19] Another well-known example is the UN resolution 60/7 adopted in 2005 on Israel's request, recognizing January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Both the institution as well as for the museum, Yad Vashem can be seen to interact with these international tendencies in its approach to preserving the memory of the Holocaust. In fact, since his appointment as Chairman in August 2021, Dani Dayan is explicitly working to internationalize the institution and museum:

> We are trying to become much more open as an institution. In some senses Yad Vashem was closed before. I resemble it to a castle with huge treasures but that is surrounded by ten meter high walls and snipers to prevent anyone from coming too close. Right now, we are tearing down the walls and firing the snipers. Today, we have an institute that is much more open to collaborate.[20]

Dayan travels the world to meet with state leaders and officials, and in coming to Israel, these leaders make formal visits to Yad Vashem. The Chairman talks about increasing international presence and 'decentralizing' Yad Vashem. In January 2023, Dayan made his first ever trip to Germany, where he opened a 'Yad Vashem exhibition'.[21] More so, during his visit plans were struck up to build a full-fledged Yad Vashem educational center in Germany, Dayan tells me.[22] During his visit, Dayan formally opened the exhibition 'The Book of Names', a gigantic construction of a book that lists the names of victims of the Holocaust. On its website furthermore, Yad Vashem provides an extensive amount of (online) educational curricula for people who want to learn about the Holocaust or about Yad Vashem's collections.[23]

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[18] For the Stockholm Declaration (2000), see https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration

[19] For the amended version of the Stockholm Declaration (2020), see https://www.hmd.org.uk/what-is-holocaust-memorial-day/the-stockholm-declaration/

[20] Interview with Dani Dayan, March 1 2023, Jerusalem.

[21] See, for example, press release, "Historic Visit: Yad Vashem Chairman Dani Dayan in Germany for the First Time." *Yad Vashem*, published January 17, 2023, https://www.yadvashem.org/press-release/17-january-2023-19-44.html

[22] Interview with Dani Dayan, March 1 2023, Jerusalem.

[23] See, for example, Yad Vashem, "Educational Materials," *Yad Vashem*, accessed May 21, 2023, https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-materials.html

Yad Vashem's international outreach further exemplifies the institution's entanglement with its international environment. Adding to this, artists working on Holocaust exhibitions in and around Yad Vashem reappear on different Holocaust remembrance sites around the world, establishing a transnational network of visual artists, sculptors, and curators. An example is Michal Rovner's *Living Landscape* in Yad Vashem, the first exhibition visitors encounter inside the Holocaust History Museum. Rovner has made a similar exhibition in the Auschwitz-Birkenau museum, entitled *Traces of Life*. Similarly, former Chairman and curator of Yad Vashem, Avner Shalev, also was involved in the designing of new exhibitions in Auschwitz-Birkenau. In several ways, contact and interaction can be observed between monuments and memorials at different Holocaust remembrance sites.

As for strategies of commemoration, Bickford and Sodaro describe the Holocaust as a "model for those wishing to come to terms with the past" (Bickford and Sodaro 2010, 67). Framed broadly under the rubric of memorialization, these authors argue that over the past decades, an internationalization of a new commemorative paradigm can be observed in which the relation between past, present and future is rearticulated: "[T]he past [...] is very much on the agenda of social and political actors in the present [...] who hope that by confronting the past, they will be able to make real and concrete contributions to building a better future" (Bickford and Sodaro 2010, 68). They point to several rationales and methods for this new paradigm, within the context of collective memory (Halbwachs 1992 [1925]), of an ongoing search for the best educational and social instruments for dealing with and transmitting memory that characterize the 21st century.

In the case of Holocaust memory, the fact that as time progresses, fewer and fewer survivors remain, adds to this necessity. According to the authors, the new commemorative paradigm takes education as its primary means of dealing with and transmitting memory (Bickford and Sodaro 2010, 78). Increasingly, it can be observed that places of Holocaust commemoration, like museums, use carefully deliberated emotive strategies to emotionally impact visitors (Young 1993). According to proponents of this paradigm, making visitors 'experience' the past for themselves, making them bear witness, is an instructive way of affecting the visitor. Another strategy commonly invoked is empathy, seeking to make the visitor identify with the victims and thus to teach them empathy (Bickford and Sodaro 2010, 81). Shalev attests to this need for new and modernized methods for commemoration at the museum grounds:

> My starting point and basic assumption was that as the years advanced, individual morning would dissipate, the feeling of severed limbs would become dulled, and that the memory of the Holocaust would become like that of any other historical event. In order to prevent this drift, and enable future generations to connect to a memory with inherent significance for their identity and values, a memory with the capacity to shape the future, I realized we would have to place educational work at the center of our endeavors (Shalev 2010, 9).

This passage reflects the relation between past, present and future that Bickford and Sodaro described above. Furthermore, Shalev stresses the need for education, describing Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum as an 'educational-experiential process' (Shalev 2010, 11). He continues:

> The museum's chief target population was defined as young Jews belonging to the third and fourth generations, with no personal recollections of the Second World War period and the Holocaust. [...] This meant that the museum would not be aimed at perpetuating or commemorating communities, countries, or different groups, but would rather relate personal narratives that present information and enable experiential visit. [...] The exhibition was intended to let visitors go through a process that generates a sense of empathy and identification with the narrative (Shalev 2010, 10-11).

Andreas Huyssen notes that in the postmodern era, with museums' shift towards education-oriented exhibitions, the task of curators has expanded greatly, to "mobilize collections, to set them in motion within the walls of the home museum and across the globe as well as in the heads of the spectators" (Huyssen 1994, 21). Shalev discusses how he and his team of curators decided on presenting the unfolding of historical events from a personal viewpoint, using personification as the major axis of the narrative's structure (Shalev 2010, 12). This decision, Shalev describes, remains the fundamental challenge of Yad Vashem: to, on the one hand, adhere to the structure of historical events, whilst simultaneously presenting individual stories at the core of these events on the other.[24] Back in the early 2000s, Shalev therefore chose to present two strata of representation within the museum: one would be the stratum of major historical events, unfolding chronologically. The second stratum was the personal, 'the question of narrative,' which would "be integrated within the general historical stratum and maintain a constant dialogue with it" (Shalev 2010, 12).

We can see these different objectives unfolding in how Holocaust memory is spatialized inside the Holocaust History Museum. After having passed Rovner's *Living Landscape*, the second exhibition that visitors face inside the Holocaust History Museum is an exhibition on the Klooga concentration camp in Estonia. Visitors encounter a large photograph of the Klooga camp immediately after its liberation by the Soviet army, in September 1944. The photograph depicts corpses lying on top and in between wooden logs, ready to be burned conjointly. It is a shocking image. The photograph serves as a background to glass display cases exhibiting letters, photos and artifacts that the Jewish victims carried with them in the camp. With these literal layers in exhibiting the historical event, the victims become humanized again. To my tour guide Zara, this exhibition sums up Yad Vashem's approach since 2005. The Klooga exhibition serves as an example of how Yad Vashem's various museological objectives, of empathy and identification through historical and personal strata, are spatialized inside the museum.

So too does Yad Vashem invite visitors to an experiential walk through the Holocaust History Museum. Notable elements in the exhibition are the exhibition room where visitors walk through a reconstruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, with train tracks built into the floor, and actual artifacts from the Ghetto exhibited. Yad Vashem constructed this floor of original cobblestones brought from Warsaw (Harel 2010, 21) These are observable trends in the Holocaust museums in Washington and Berlin as well (Polouektova 2005, 128).

Another telling example, where we can see the objective of identification play out, is the exhibition of hundreds of shoes belonging to Holocaust victims, housed in a glass show-case that is sunk in the floor. Visitors are supposed to walk over the shoes, to see their own shoes as part

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[24] Interview with Avner Shalev, March 5 2023, Tel Aviv.

of the whole, and thus identify with the victims.[25] Zara tells me however that most of the time, visitors do not dare to step onto the glass ceiling. With a lowered voice, Zara tells me that this particular exhibition, in her eyes, failed.

Another carefully crafted exhibition which invites identification with Holocaust victims within is the *Hall of Names* exhibition, the very last exhibition visitors walk through prior to ending on the balcony. The room comprises a structure of a circle encompassing two cones. One cone soars upward, the second is carved out of the mountain rock below. Looking up, visitors see six hundred photographs of Holocaust victims. When visitors look down into the water in the mountain rock below, their and the victims' faces become part of the same visual plethora. Surrounding the visitors are the *Pages of Testimony*, a huge but incomplete archive of victims of the Holocaust. "Now that you have learned their stories, we are one with them and we have a responsibility to remember them," I hear a tour guide say, as I am staring into the puddle. In these examples, we see how Yad Vashem spatializes its specific museological and commemorative objectives inside the Holocaust History Museum.

In line with the commemorative paradigm of confronting the past to shape a better future, 'responsibility' is a theme that echoes through the halls of the museum. At the end of the tour in the *Hall of Names*, visitors are invited to reflect on and take responsibility in remembering the victims of the Holocaust by their tour guides. By bearing witness to the horrors of the Holocaust in the museum, visitors supposedly have learned. Walking out onto the balcony with my tour guide Avram, from the darkness of the museum into the bright sunlight of Jerusalem, he too started about responsibility. When I asked him what that responsibility could be, he says: "You have to be grateful and stand up. To be like the Righteous people. Try to be someone of light and not of darkness."[26]

Safdie echoes this discourse of responsibility when he says: "Perhaps the most demanding [structures] of all are memorials – buildings of mourning, remembering, meditation. Here the architect is called upon to reach the sublime," writes Safdie (Safdie 2022, 187). What Safdie alludes to is a relation between memory and its aesthetical representation of that memory. In a bit, we come back to this when we discuss the genealogy of Yad Vashem and the question of aesthetic formations around Holocaust memory.

Dayan voices yet another variation on the theme of responsibility. He says: "I will not speak on the behalf of the dead, except on their remembrance, and on the duty to remember them, to tell their stories. This allows me to speak in their name, we inherit that responsibility."[27] Dayan relates how on his inaugural day as Chairman of Yad Vashem in 2021, he was taken to the Art Museum on the Yad Vashem compounds. Here, he saw the artwork of Gela Seksztajn (1907-1943), a Polish-Jewish artist who died during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. Next to her work, Dayan read a piece of her will, which reads:

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[25] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.
[26] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.
[27] Interview with Dani Dayan, March 1 2023, Jerusalem.

As I stand on the border between life and death, certain that I will not remain alive, I wish to take leave from my friends and works... My works I bequeath to the Jewish museum to be built after the war.

Farewell my friends. Farewell the Jewish people.
Never again allows such a catastrophe.

From the last will and testament of Gela Seksztajn,
August 1, 1942

Moved by this, Dayan has put this quote on the wall in his office: "It was when I read it that I understood my responsibility. She was talking to me. The significance of that is that I represent six million people that cannot speak. That gives me responsibilities."[28] In Dayan's words, we see a variation of what Benedict Anderson (1936-2015) terms 'reversed ventriloquism' (Anderson 2006, 198), in that Dayan maintains that he represents the voice of the dead, and is able to speak on their behalf.

The interactions, or globalizing tendencies of Holocaust memory as outlined above, and indeed, Dayan's claim to universal spokesmanship, by inversion, give us insight into the particularities of Yad Vashem in its Israeli context. Coming from his observations on the responsibilities of memory above, Dayan simultaneously introduces Yad Vashem as a typically Israeli place. When I ask Dayan about the common denominator to his work, inside and outside Yad Vashem,[29] he says that this is the fact that he is Jewish: "I feel Jewish history inside me. The most important thing for me is Jewish continuity,"[30] says Dayan.

The way in which Yad Vashem perceives Jewishness is important in discussing Yad Vashem with regards to the different memory paradigms. Yad Vashem continuously stresses its commitments to presenting 'the Jewish perspective' on the Holocaust (Harel 2010; Shalev 2006; Safdie 2006). At once, a commitment to 'the Jewish perspective' appeals to a transnational idea of Jewishness. Interrelatedly, adhering to the Jewish perspective for Dayan relates to the idea that the Holocaust is a unique and incomparable event. Its commitment to 'the Jewish perspective' in presenting the Holocaust pulls Yad Vashem inward to its Israeli environment with regards to Jewish diversity within Israel.

As cited above, Young goes so far as to say that in each country 'a different Holocaust' is remembered (Young 1993, viii-ix). As Young points out, these differences transpire both between and within nations. The way in which the Holocaust is represented varies from museum to museum as the result of specific commemorative landscapes. This interplay between the commemoration of the historical event of the Holocaust on the one hand, and its local or national traditions of remembrance on the other, results in an interweaving of the two, resulting in 'glocal' memory forces.

It has been argued that 'glocal' is a useful concept in looking at the contemporary scholarly attention on time-space considerations and the links between temporal and spatial dimensions of

human life (Robertson 1995, 37). The way in which the global interacts with the local is complex and perhaps effaces straightforward theorization, but the notion of 'glocal' memory is useful for us because it points to the ways in which global and local forces are entangled. For our purposes, this 'glocal' Holocaust memory means that global Holocaust memory is interwoven in a very unique way into a local Israeli context.

An example of this interwovenness can be seen in Yad Vashem's exhibition of a World War II cattle car, donated to Yad Vashem by the Polish government. Next to Yad Vashem, the same type of cattle car is also exhibited in the USHMM and the Imperial War Museum in London. Whereas in Washington and London the cattle car is exhibited to, quite literally, signify the process of deportation and the journey to Auschwitz (Cole 2004, 132), in Yad Vashem the cattle car is explicitly displayed within a redemptive narrative of the Holocaust. It draws its meaning not only from the artifact itself, but more so from its fragile positioning on the edge of an abyss, overlooking the hills of Jerusalem. A leaflet from Yad Vashem makes this clear: "Although symbolizing the journey towards annihilation and oblivion, facing as it does the hills of Jerusalem, the memorial also conveys the hope and the gift of life of the State of Israel and Jerusalem, eternal capital of the Jewish people."[31]

Tim Cole points out that there is more than mere nativization going on, he points to the 'nationalization' of the Holocaust in different museum settings around the world, to describe how "the Holocaust is exhibited as the radical Other and the very antithesis of the contemporary nation state" (Cole 2004, 143). Here, we are alluded to what Goldberg calls, in the case of Yad Vashem, the 'Zionization' on the Holocaust (Goldberg 2012, 200).

The Spatial Genealogy of Yad Vashem

Above, I introduced Benedict Anderson's theorization around nation building. Also, we saw how Levy and Szneider argued that the memory of the Holocaust has paved the way for an international *imagined community* around the Holocaust. In analyzing the genealogy of Yad Vashem, Birgit Meyer's notion of 'aesthetic formation', a concept that she relates to Anderson's 'imagined community', proves particularly useful. Anderson speaks of an imagined community as the idea that groups of people are bonded or united through an *imagination* of their community, whose members do not have to physically meet or know each other in order to feel connected (Anderson 2006, 6-7). Dayan's attachment to the will of Gela Seksztajn and his feelings of responsibility illustrate this dynamic.

The modern history of the Jewish people makes clear that such imaginations can have several underpinnings, be they historical, political, or related to trauma. To Meyer, Anderson's notion of imagination is useful in that it acknowledges that "communities evolve around mediated imaginations that are able to substitute the (spatial) distance between members with a feeling of togetherness" (Meyer 2009, 3). To add, she introduces 'aesthetics' to refer to humans' sensorial engagement with the world, and the knowledge that follows from this. Accordingly, Meyer presents the notion of 'aesthetic formation' as the creation of an imagined community through the formative impact of shared aesthetics, induced by the experience of a tangible medium such as images, objects and spaces (Meyer 2009, 7).

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[31] Yad Vashem, *The Memorial of the Deportations*, undated leaflet, accessed March 2, 2023.

Meyer's notion of aesthetic formation alerts us to the material and spatial dimensions of memory. She points to the dependency of memory upon a material component: memory is materialized, or spatialized. In tracing the development of Yad Vashem this proves useful to see how Yad Vashem fits within an Israeli, and, specifically, Jerusalemite typography. Apart from this, Meyer introduces sensory experience to the present discussion, alerting to the fundamental role of the human body.

In analyzing Yad Vashem's spatial genealogy, a careful look at Yad Vashem's chief architect Moshe Safdie is in place. Safdie has been heavily involved in Yad Vashem since the 1970s, and he has been adding to Yad Vashem ever since. Not only should we examine Safdie's work in Yad Vashem in isolation; we also have to understand this work in the context of his larger architectural oeuvre, specifically his work in Jerusalem. Within the larger analysis of Safdie's architectural fingerprints in Israel and Jerusalem, I focus on three specific contributions of Safdie to Yad Vashem: *The Children's Memorial* in 1976, *The Memorial of the Deportations* in 1995, and most famously, the Holocaust History Museum, in 2005.

Many cities have been metaphorically described as palimpsests, Jerusalem no exception (Ockman 2006, 22-23). Safdie describes building in Jerusalem as a challenge of a particular kind: "One cannot build with indifference in Jerusalem. It requires either an act of arrogance – building boldly as Solomon and Herod did – or of aggression – demolishing the old fabric and building anew as the Romans and Umayyads did; or it demands humility – absorbing the past, reflecting upon it, respecting it, as one considers the present and future" (Safdie 1989, xii). Safdie himself adheres to what he calls 'vernacular architecture,' which he describes as an architecture that emerges from the realities of its environment and is in dialogue with it, responds to its materials, its climate, and the needs of its community (Safdie 1970, 244).

Safdie was born in 1938 in Haifa, Mandatory Palestine. Up until he was fifteen, Safdie lived with his family on a *kibbutz*. In the *kibbutz* he got a strong sense of the Zionist narrative, but also a sense of the integration of habitation and nature (Safdie 2022). In 1953, Safdie and his family moved to Montreal, Canada. After obtaining Canadian citizenship and finishing his high school, Safdie enrolled in the school of architecture in McGill University, where he graduated in 1961. Having spent considerable time in the United States, Safdie returned to Canada in 1967 to participate in the World's Fair (27-29 April, 1967). Not yet thirty years of age, Safdie internationally established himself as an architect of prestige with his project *Habitat 67*.

Habitat 67 would only be the prelude to Safdie's rise. He returned to Israel in 1968, where he quickly made name for himself and opened an architecture studio in Jerusalem in 1970. Safdie's consecutive imprint on the Israeli landscape cannot be overstated. His works include but are not restricted to: David Citadel Hotel, the city of Modi'in, the Yeshiva Porat Yosef, the Hebrew Union College, David's Village in the Mamilla District, the Mamilla Center and the Mamilla Hotel, Mercaz Shimshon, the Yitzhak Rabin Center, the Ben Gurion Airport, and the tomb for Yitzhak Rabin (1922-1995) and Leah Rabin (1928-2000).

In order to understand what Safdie would add to Yad Vashem over a period of three decades, we have to first look at his architectural work in Jerusalem. The year of 1967 proves to be vital in this, when Israel occupied big plots of Palestinian land and claimed the entire Old City of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War (5-10 June 1967). Safdie, who was still in Montreal at the time of war, relates how powerful this experience was for him, both personally and professionally (Safdie 2022, 87). Two years before Israel would occupy East-Jerusalem, however, starting in

1965, the Israeli government had started planning a largescale architectural and urbanistic modification of Jerusalem. An extremely important figure in these plans is Jerusalem's former mayor and national hero, Teddy Kollek (1911-2007), who is described as the principal instigator of the modern face of Jerusalem (Sharkansky 1984, 300), shaped along Zionist lines. To this day, Kollek enjoys wide popularity and praise in Jerusalem for his influence on the modern face of the city: "[P]eople used to say he [Kollek] was the greatest builder of Jerusalem since Herod," Safdie recalls in his memoires (Safdie 2022, 90).

Kollek and Safdie were in a close relationship with each other. Together, the two were at the forefront of drastic changes to Jerusalem's landscape, particularly in and around the Old City. Here, Safdie's first project was the rebuilding of the Yeshivat Porat Yosef, a rabbinic college that was destroyed in 1948. As it stands in direct vicinity to the Western Wall, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Holy Sepulcher, the rebuilding of the yeshiva was charged with an identitary importance. More controversial was Safdie's Western Wall Precinct plan, for building a number of piazzas right in front of the Western Wall. Although the plans were never actually implemented, Safdie was involved in the forceful demolition of the Arab Mughrabi Quarter, which was located directly in front of the Western Wall.

Around this time, Safdie was invited to work on Yad Vashem. By then, the site had built a considerable identity and had established itself as an international institution. Coming into Yad Vashem in the early 1970s, Safdie entered amidst a vast change that was taking place in the nature of Holocaust remembrance in Yad Vashem's landscape, which reflected a broader change in Israeli society's attitudes towards the Holocaust, survivors and their traumas: a change from silence and shame, to understanding and sympathy. The memorials installed at Yad Vashem from its opening in 1953 until the late 1970s are predominantly figural and focus on the fighters, heroes, and martyrs of the Holocaust. Since the 1980s, the memorials installed are more conceptual and postmodern, revolving around visual strategies of absence and disorientation (Goldman 2006, 103), and dedicated to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust.

Natasha Goldman argues that as the understanding of trauma evolved in Israel, this had repercussions in the visual field of memorial-making (Goldman 2006, 104). Historian Dina Porat explains the commonly held opinion towards Holocaust survivors in postwar Israel: "attitudes towards the Jews of Europe and those survivors who came to Israel during the 1940s and early 1950s are a source of disgrace to Israeli society" (Porat 1998, 785). This commonly held opinion holds that is was not until the Eichmann trial in 1961 that attitudes towards survivors began to soften in the 1970s and 1980s. Before Eichmann's trial, only the fighters were lauded and made welcome, argues psychologist Dan Bar-On: "In the political atmosphere of the War of Independence, there was a tendency to legitimize only those who fought in the ghetto uprisings or with the partisans" (Bar-On 1998, 107). This was largely reflected in Israeli art and film (Levinger 1993, 737).

In discussing the development of Yad Vashem's memorial landscape, art historian Paolo Coen reverberates the above mentioned idea of a layered typography:

From that point on [1961] Yad Vashem continued to be articulated as a series of architectural interventions. The entire complex in effect follows the logic of a never-ending tale, that is to say, an historical account narrated through nuclei of signification, which every generation has the right, the duty, and the responsibility to re-elaborate and rewrite (Coen 2019, 52).

Along similar lines, Jackie Feldman describes memorial sites as palimpsests that develop specific 'careers' reflecting changing understandings of death and national sacrifice (Feldman 2007, 1147).

Safdie's involvement with Yad Vashem started in 1976 when he was asked by the Knesset to design a small museum to the one and a half million Jewish children murdered in the Holocaust. His involvement can be seen to symbolize a change in Israeli memorial culture, from silence to recognition of the victims and survivors. In Safdie's design for *The Children's Memorial*, which was officially dedicated in 1987, we see multiple architectural motifs that form a prelude to his work on the new Holocaust History Museum in 2005.

The Children's Memorial is placed inside or under a hill, and so forms a seemingly integral part of the landscape. Entering, the visitor moves downwards, marking a gradual passage from nature to history. The visitor walks through complete darkness at first, before finally encountering a light. This light multiplies by the thousands through the endless mirrors and panels inserted along the room's walls, giving a notion of infinity. Throughout, a voice in the background reads the name, age, and birth place of every child killed: "It will take three years to read them and then – like the triennial cycle of Torah readings, they will be repeated forever,"[32] it says in leaflet from Yad Vashem.

The Children's Memorial was the first exhibition of its kind at Yad Vashem, and was thereafter followed by similar memorials such as the *Valley of the Communities* (1987). All these monuments stress sympathy with Holocaust victims and survivors. Whereas previously, memorials were figural and minimalist in style, these memorials are marked by an absence and are disorienting. Safdie's first contribution to Yad Vashem was thus the product of a changing Israeli society, and in it, we see how the change in dealing with trauma and the change in Israeli society are aesthetically materialized and spatialized at Yad Vashem.

The second notable contribution of Safdie came in 1995, when he designed *The Memorial of the Deportations*. The start of this exhibition is a wide concrete wall, engraved with the testimony of a survivor. A segment of railway bridge intersects this wall in the middle. The railway tracks are interrupted. At the very end of the tracks, stands the cattle car, on the verge on an abyss. Engraved on the concrete wall visitors read a survivor's account of the conditions in a similar cattle car: "Over one hundred people were packed into our cattle car... It is impossible to describe the tragic situation in our airless, closed car. Everyone tried to push his way to a small air opening." The memorial is further evidence of the change in Israeli attitudes towards Holocaust survivors: *The Memorial of the Deportations* marked the first time at Yad Vashem where a survivor's voice is made visible and part of the landscape.

Thirdly, Safdie designed the new Holocaust History Museum and its surroundings, opened in 2005. Coen traces Safdie's work in Yad Vashem to two other museums in particular, the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, and the USHMM in Washington D.C.. We can see shared

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[32] Yad Vashem, *Infinite light: a memorial to children who died in the Holocaust*, undated leaflet, accessed March 2, 2023.

museological concepts between these museums that aim to realize "a building, a museological container able to 'reverberate', to put itself on the same wavelength as its theme and as the sensations and state of mind of its visitors" (Coen 2019, 57). An example of this is the *Tower of Faces* in Washington, a direct precedent for Safdie's *Hall of Names* in Yad Vashem, according to Coen (Coen 2019, 58). The *Hall of Names*, in turn, inspired yet another similar exhibition in the Shoah Memorial in Milan, 'Binario 21'.

What some theorists point to is that memorials or museums are often contested places, and are beset with conflict. Accordingly, Friedland and Hecht show that these spaces seek to bring to the fore formerly silenced voices within national narratives (Friedland and Hecht 2006, 20). This switches up the balance between center and periphery of what is remembered. In the next two chapters, we will see how the particular Bible passages can be seen to interact with this movement along the balance of center and periphery. For now, to come back to how museums deal with diversity and changing national narratives, we take a look at some of the challenges that Yad Vashem currently faces. With this, we simultaneously get a grasp over the changing tides of Holocaust remembrance in Israel and how this is negotiated and spatialized within the museum.

The Typography of a Changing Memory

As we saw above, the motivations for the grand redesign of Yad Vashem in the early 2000s sprang from the need to reach out to the generations with no personal recollections of the Second World War or the Holocaust. The major change in the museum's course since its reopening in 2005 has been that it has adopted the point of view of the Jewish victims and thus aims to present a "fuller and more humane history" (Shalev 2010, 11). As we saw above, there was careful deliberation over how to achieve this in the curatorial concepts of the exhibits – the interwovenness of the historical and personal strata, and the emotion driven intentions (Harel 2010, 26). The redesigning of Yad Vashem provides a window to ask how the changes in Israeli memory culture are spatially translated inside the museum. This is both an empirical question, of how Yad Vashem deals with presenting a changing Jewish perspective inside, as well as a conceptual question, pertaining to the spatialization of this changing Jewish perspective.

Israeli historian Hanna Yablonka typifies the vast changes that Yad Vashem has undergone: whereas the old museum, according to Yablonka, spoke in the third person plural 'about them', removing in full awareness any personal and individual motif, the new museum "is all first person singular, telling us so that we should know and principally so we will remember – now aware that this can only be achieved via a single, personal narrative that penetrates hearts and minds" (Yablonka 2010, 100). Notably in this regard is the above mentioned *Memorial of the Deportations*. After Yad Vashem's reopening in 2005 the name of the memorial was changed into *The Memorial to the Deportees*, so as to "make it more personal, and amplify the Jewish perspective,"[33] Shalev says.

Important to note is that, as Shalev describes, these curatorial concepts of the exhibition served as the basis for the architectural competition of the new Holocaust History Museum (Shalev 2010, 13): "We imposed our ideas on Safdie," Shalev says, describing an intricate collaboration between the team of curators and the architects in the planning of the new Yad Vashem: "When Safdie planned the exit of the museum, he planned something huge. It was too gigantic, too fantastic.

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[33] Interview with Avner Shalev, March 5 2023, Tel Aviv.

You cannot do that in Jerusalem, you have to be more modest. The Holocaust is not about glorification."[34]

Sitting with Shalev in a café in Tel Aviv, he draws out on a napkin Safdie's original plans a huge baroque curling ending of the Holocaust History Museum. He tells me that the way the ending looks now is the result of a compromise between him and Safdie: "I wanted to cut it even shorter, but Safdie added a little more."[35] There was some friction in questions of aesthetics. More importantly for our purposes, is to observe that, imposing curatorial concepts on the architect, there is a strong relation between the content of the museum and its form. This is an argument for looking at the content of the museum conjointly with its form and Yad Vashem's landscape.

Above, we saw how Coen reverberated the idea of Yad Vashem as a layered typography or palimpsest, when he said that from the early 1960s onwards, Yad Vashem "continued to be articulated as a series of architectural interventions," describing the museum grounds as a "never-ending tale" (Coen 2019, 52). He continues that the grounds of Yad Vashem are like a 'jazz performance', "in which the individual contributions of the individual players [...] carried far more importance than the actual piece of music played together" (Coen 2019, 58).

Indeed, when walking over the grounds of Yad Vashem, visitors feel daunted by the sheer amount of memorials. In total, the complex houses over fifteen memorials, scattered over Har ha-Zikaron. Something can be said for Feldman's idea of memorial careers, in that, since the 1960s in general, but especially surrounding the opening of the new museum in 2005, memorials and statues have continuously been added, removed, or replaced. In her exhaustive study of Israeli settlement museums, Tamar Katriel draws on the notion of 'negotiations' to describe how museums continuously have to adapt to and negotiate with the national collectives of which they are a part:

> Through the messages they produce, museums conduct social negotiations over the shaping of the Israeli collective memory. they are tortuous, harrowing negotiations, that engage with the debate on collective identities, on group boundaries, and on the struggle for social legitimacy and prestige. Israeli society is now explicitly and consciously holding that debate, and it informs political and cultural life (Katriel 1997, 5).

I walk with Zara on the Warsaw Ghetto Square, which visitors pass upon returning from their walks through the Holocaust History Museum. Placed into a massive red brick wall, *The Wall of Remembrance*, are two sculptures by Nathan Rapoport (1911-1987): 'The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising', and 'The Last March'. Whereas 'The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising' stresses heroism, 'The Last March' depicts Jews in a state of victimhood. "It took many years for spiritual resistance to enter into the picture of memory,"[36] Zara says as we stand on the square: "Now, the two Rapoports stand side by side." We can see these changes in the landscape of Yad Vashem as negotiations, that are mirrored in the museum.

What Zara pointed me to is that Yad Vashem's exhibitions and landscape change slowly, and go in tandem with larger debates, or negotiations, that prevail in the country. She reverberates the voices we have heard above: "When Holocaust survivors first arrived to Israel, Israel was not

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[34] Interview with Avner Shalev, March 5 2023, Tel Aviv.
[35] Interview with Avner Shalev, March 5 2023, Tel Aviv.
[36] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.

exactly happy with them. The result was that silence prevailed for many years. The old museum's problem was that you could not share your story. Now, we present the Holocaust with a human face, through the Jewish perspective."[37]

This Jewish perspective is not static, but changes constantly, Zara says. For over thirty years, the paradigmatic focus of Holocaust remembrance has been on Eastern Europe, specifically Poland. "It takes many years to be recognized,"[38] says Zara. During our walk, she describes how today, Yad Vashem is grappling with the issue of representing Jewish diversity in Yad Vashem. Now, formerly marginalized voices come to the fore in the museum, such as the perspectives and voices of the Revisionists, Romanian Jews, and the Haredim: "For years, these and other voices were wiped out of Israeli history. What we are working on today, but could still do better, is a more inclusive approach to commemoration,"[39] says Zara, as we stand before a new part of the exhibition showing the fate of the Roma and Sinti.

Zara voiced a critical attitude towards 'the Jewish perspective', both on the level of the Jewish perspective itself, as well as on the discourse of uniqueness surrounding the Holocaust. Whereas Dayan goes to tremendous efforts to refrain from any comparison between the Holocaust and other genocides, as we saw above, Zara says: "Nothing in human history is unique. Genocide has clearly recognizable steps. I think today, we are in a position where we can remember the suffering of others without diminishing what happened to Jews."[40] She was aware however of how controversial her standpoint was. She does note how important the Holocaust is in Israel, and that is exactly why there has to be more inclusivity to her: "The Holocaust is the fiber of our country."[41]

Throughout our walk, Zara took me to artifacts that attested to the challenges of representation of Jewish diversity. Standing before an exhibition about Jews in North-Africa that was added to the 2005 museum, she says: "First, their stories were not so important. Now however, we try to lose the hierarchy of survivors."[42] But at the same time, Yad Vashem's inclusive approach has to have a statistical base. This reflects what has happened in reality, says Zara. In its publications, Yad Vashem describes this as a major curatorial dilemma, as a 'battle over space' (Harel 2010, 42). This is a good example of the relation between memory and its spatialization: due to the limited space inside the museum, some groups are well represented and others not. Accordingly, the majority of the Holocaust History Museum is dedicated to Eastern Europe. This spatialization of Holocaust memory further became apparent in the idiosyncratic walk Zara and I took in the Holocaust History Museum. Where large parts of the exhibition rooms were dedicated to Eastern Europe, much smaller space is given to the exhibitions on the Roma and Sinti, on the Jews of North Africa, and, notably, on the controversial role of Haj Amin al-Husseini (1897-1974), former Mufti of Jerusalem, in the Holocaust.[43]

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[37] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.
[38] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.
[39] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.
[40] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.
[41] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.
[42] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.
[43] For further reference about Yad Vashem's deliberation in exhibiting an artifact on the role of Amin al-Husseini, see, for example, Dani Dayan, "Adhering to the Historical Truth about the Mufti during the Holocaust," *Yad Vashem*, published 2 December 2021, https://www.yadvashem.org/blog/adhering-to-the-historical-truth-about-the-mufti-during-the-holocaust.html

I would not have seen these bits if it was not for Zara. Similarly, my tourist interlocutors did not pick up these little nuances. In this sense, the path Zara and me took was idiosyncratic: "It was nothing like an ordinary tour,"[44] Zara said at the end of our walk. Indeed, I noticed this from my tour with Avram, and with all the other tours that I spied on in the course of my ethnography. My walk with Zara appeared to be an exception to the rhythms that I encountered in the spatial storytelling of Yad Vashem.

Concluding Remarks

Yad Vashem can be seen to hover between different memory discourses and therefore between different levels of Holocaust representation. In this chapter we have encountered several variations on the spatialization of Holocaust memory. We started with situating Yad Vashem in relation to its international environment, to uncover how the institution and museum are entangled in global Holocaust commemoration paradigms. At the same time, Yad Vashem's commitment to presenting 'the Jewish perspective' pulls our analysis inward to the genealogies of Yad Vashem within Israel itself.

Safdie has been a key figure in the geographical formation of Israel and Jerusalem from 1967 onwards. What this brief history shows is that Safdie was heavily involved in the sweeping changes that Jerusalem underwent after 1967. Focusing on Yad Vashem itself, in this chapter we have encountered insight into the multiple ways in which Holocaust memory is spatialized. The monuments on Yad Vashem's landscape reflect changes in the understanding of trauma in the Israeli national collectivity. Evolving from an emphasis on Jewish heroism and resistance towards an emphasis on Jewish victimhood, this change in Holocaust memory has had visual and spatial repercussions in Yad Vashem's landscape.

As for the insides of the Holocaust History Museum, we have seen how Israeli negotiations over 'the Jewish perspective' and over representing the heterogeneous Jewish community work in tandem with spatial considerations. We see how different segments of the Jewish community are spatially arranged in the museum, reflecting changes in Israeli society – battling over space. More so, the imposition of curatorial and museological concepts onto Yad Vashem's architectural design is a strong example of the intimate relation between content and form; and of the materialization of processes of negotiation and evolvement of trauma in the Israeli society.

Having acquired understanding of the different ways in which Holocaust memory is spatialized, this first part of the spatial analysis lays the groundwork for understanding religious motifs and symbolism within Yad Vashem's spatial constellation of Holocaust memory, to be discussed in the next chapter.

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[44] Interview with Zara, March 14 2023, Jerusalem.

Chapter III: The (Dis)Placement of the Dry Bones – A Walk through one of Yad Vashem's Spatial Stories of Catastrophe and Redemption

And praised. Auschwitz. Be. Majdanek. The Lord. Treblinka. And praised. Buchenwald. Be. Mauthausen. The Lord. Belzec. And praised. Sobibor. Be. Chelmo. The Lord. Ponary. And praised. Theresienstadt. Be. Warsaw. The Lord. Vilna. And praised. Skarzysko. Be. Bergen-Belsen. The Lord. Janow. And praised. Dora. Be. Neuengamme. The Lord. Pustkow. And praised... Amen

André Schwartz-Bart, *The Last of the Just* (1959)
Exhibited in the Holocaust History Museum, Yad Vashem

Coming from the previous chapter, in the second part of our spatial analysis we now embark on our walk over Yad Vashem's landscape, and further situate religion in Yad Vashem's spatialization of Holocaust memory. In the previous chapter I provided a (political) history of the space at Yad Vashem, and touched upon the politics or history of Yad Vashem as a space. Now, we concern ourselves with the spatiality of politics, history, and religion. Yad Vashem's architecture tells a specific linear version of historical time. A museum has the capacity to bring together, within one space, different historical times (Bennet 1995, 179). These times are arranged in the form of a linear path whose route can be covered in an afternoon. Thus, a museum visit to Yad Vashem can be understood as an organized walking through evolutionary or historical time.

As we progress on our path, we encounter different historical times. From prophecies, we move through a history of the Holocaust, and end in present times. I cling onto specific Bible passages that we encounter along the way and describe how biblical themes can be understood in Yad Vashem's spatialization of Holocaust memory – in Yad Vashem's spatial storytelling of catastrophe and redemption. Paying considerable attention to the body now, in the last chapter I situate my spatial findings within academic debates on the interface of the Bible and Holocaust memory, and reflect on the implications for post-Holocaust Bible reception for the discipline of religious studies.

The path we embark on runs from the Yad Vashem's entrance square, or piazza, to the viewers' balcony at the end of the Holocaust History Museum. Afterwards, we walk back over the courtyard where visitors contemplate their visit to the museum, then over the *Valley of the Righteous Among the Nations*, back through the visitors' center, to then finally walk back onto the piazza (see appendix). I divide this walk into three chapters: The Prophecy, The Catastrophe, and The Redemption.

In this chapter, I make three main arguments. Firstly, we see how several historical narratives and times interact and are (dis)placed onto each other and produce a specific spatial story on the Yad Vashem grounds. As I argue, the presence of biblical themes on the landscape of Yad Vashem transforms the nature of our pathway, obfuscating lines between different historical times and narratives, and infusing religious motifs and symbolism into Holocaust memory. The history of the Holocaust, as well as the history of the establishment of the State of Israel, thus become charged with a strand of sacralization through the (dis)placement of the Bible passages. By

inversion, these Bible passages become infused with national and historical value. Hence, there is a reciprocal (dis)placement of religious, traumatic, and national narratives onto each other. Traffic runs both ways on Yad Vashem's grounds.

Secondly, by analyzing how Yad Vashem conceives itself in its publications, I argue that Yad Vashem stands in significant contrast to dominant theorization around space. This contrast departs from a presupposed non-social character Yad Vashem ascribes to its architecture. A focus on location may for some imply a strong focus on physicality, material or geographical places, whilst for others it might be more related to imaginary sites, cultural spaces or ideology (Knott 2005, 1). Both conceptions of space are intended and indeed, we will see how these conceptions of location or space – material and mental – can be understood conjointly.

Thirdly, I argue that inside the Holocaust History Museum, visitors' experiences are embedded in a museum practice of 'collective witness' (Couch 2002). Through the heavy emotional impact the exhibitions make, they impede the critical faculty of the visitors and in doing so, Yad Vashem constructs a bystander narrative (Berger 2003, 6). This bystander indictment is invoked as an emotional reminder and symbolic warrant, upon which Yad Vashem hangs explicit moral teachings of taking on responsibility. Overarchingly, the analysis of the reciprocal (dis)placement of multiple narratives points to the question what the installment of the sacred on Yad Vashem's grounds means for Holocaust memory, and, invertedly, what this means for an understanding of the sacred itself.

Prologue

Although Yad Vashem's redemptive narrative might be 'out there', this narrative fundamentally unfolds through its visitors, by virtue of their bodies moving over Yad Vashem's compounds. Earlier, we encountered the idea that space proceeds from the body and is constituted dialogically as a result. As Halbwachs noted earlier, a place and a group each receive the imprint of the other (Halbwachs 1941, 30).

In the introduction, Lefebvre said that "[t]he whole of social space proceeds from the body, even though it so metamorphoses the body that is may forget it altogether [...]" (Lefebvre 1991, 405). At once, the body is constitutive for social space to unfold, but, simultaneously, space affects the body to an extent that the body may 'forget itself'. Foucault likewise argues that space has the capacity to 'draw us out of ourselves' (Foucault 1968, 23). Similarly, Knott talks of a 'loss of memory', when the body encounters a spatial order (Knott 2008, 1108). All of these authors allude to a loss of critical faculty upon encountering a spatial order, and to an agency that space exerts over us. Adding to the idea that space exerts control over the body and disciplines the body into a narrative, perceived space, says Rob Shields, is often taken for granted (Shields 1999, 162-163), resulting in an uncritical acceptance of a spatial reality.

By recognizing the constitutive link between the body and social space, and by subsequently following the body's course through Yad Vashem, we get a grasp of how the body relates to the spatial order, and of how the spatial order disciplines the body into Yad Vashem's narrative. Knott argues that different parts of space are understood relationality by way of our bodies (Knott 2005, 17). Within cognitive philosophy, this link between body and mind was firmly established by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson with their work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), who wrote on spatial metaphors that "spatial orientations arise from the fact that we have bodies of the sort we have and that they function as they do in their physical environment" (Lakoff and Johnson

1980, 14). This observation further dissolves Cartesian splits between body and mind, and it challenges the notion of 'disembodied reason' (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 5). Our body and our sensory plethora contribute to our shaping of reason (Classen 1997, 402). Above, Bennet said that a museum has the capacity to bring together different times. Our discussion on the body here points to the fact that the museum ultimately has this capacity by virtue of the human body strolling over its grounds, thereby connecting, or storying, different narratives and different times. The walk over Yad Vashem's memorial complex thus functions as the process in which the different narratives of the museum are storied, constructed into meaningful coherence by virtue of the movement of the bodies of Yad Vashem's visitors, who, as they move along, partake in the process of storytelling.

It is against the backdrop of these observations on the body that Lefebvre proposes his theoretical unification of the physical and the mental through the social (Lefebvre 1991, 11). He argues that material space and metaphorical space are irrevocably linked together through the social body. Geographer Lily Kong has argued for a multi-scalar analysis of religion, including the body (Kong 2001, 226). Lefebvre and Kong alert us to intersections between geography, philosophy, and religion. Space is thought, sensed, and practiced through our bodies, thereby calling into question any 'vs' between mentalism and materialism (Knott 2005, 36). Coming from this combination, Lefebvre sees space as a 'realized abstraction' (Lefebvre 1958 [1947], 223), fusing materialism and idealism.

This phrasing, 'realized abstraction', alerts us to the very dynamics between mentalism and materialism that we encountered with Meyer's 'aesthetic formations' earlier: it points to the fact that abstractions are dependent on material mediations, which are continuously negotiated and renegotiated by specific communities (Meyer 2009). This leads us to the connecting element between mental and material in Lefebvre's work; the notion of lived space, or social space. Socially lived and produced time and space depend of both physical and mental constructs (Elden 2007, 110). The construction or production of space thus rests as much on conceptual realms as on material activities.

The Prophecy

We set off on our walk. The first chapter, The Prophecy, starts at the edge of Har ha-Zikaron, where the freshly planted pine forest leads to the security checkpoint of Yad Vashem. The spatial layout of this part of the narrative consists of the road leading up to the entry gates, the aqueduct, the piazza, and the visitors' center. The chapter ends at the beginning of the *Bridge to a Vanished World*.

Turning our heads as we walk onto the piazza, we find the prophecy of Ezekiel inscribed on the aqueduct, overlooking the piazza and forming the gateway to the Yad Vashem memorial complex. Safdie writes: "First a demarcation line had to be drawn across the hill, an aqueduct-like screen that would separate the sacred site from the surrounding city" (Safdie 2006, 96). This chapter is still excluded from the actual museum space: it functions as a separate yet not disconnected boundary that visitors have to cross before properly entering the Holocaust History Museum. On the piazza, people loiter, conversate, or pray. Groups are coming in, still laughing and talking loudly. Walking onto the piazza as a visitor, the spatial surroundings contribute to a tension build up: the beautiful landscape visitors find themselves in belies the images that they are about to encounter inside the museum.
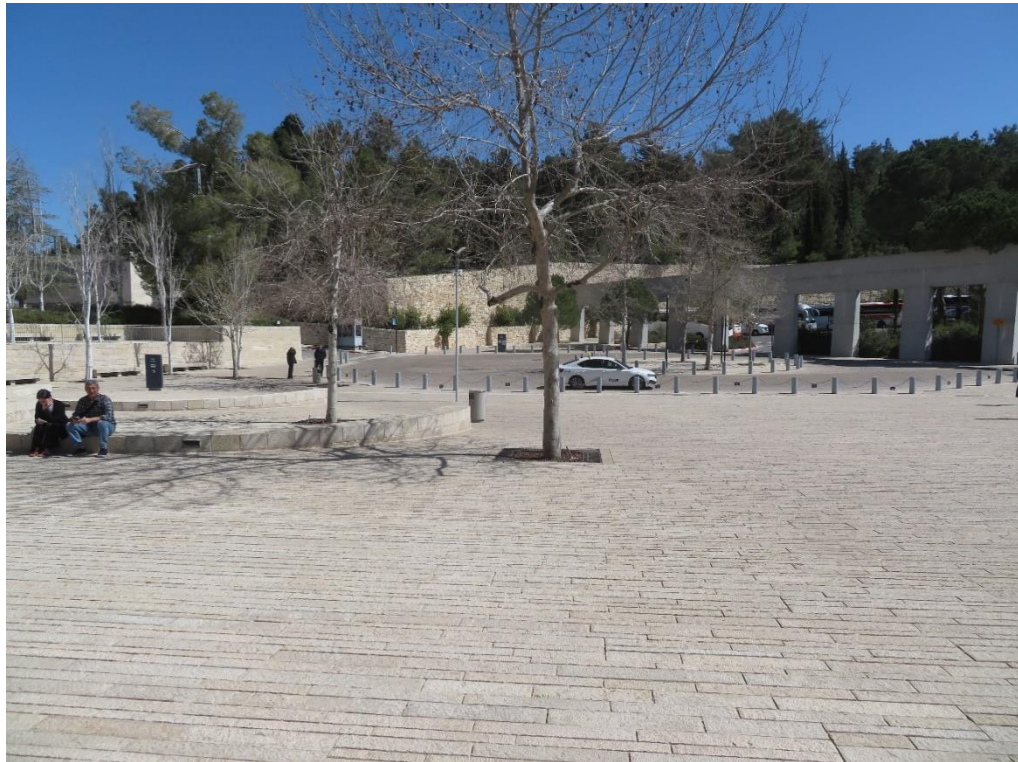
Fig. II: The piazza, facing the aqueduct with Ezekiel 37:14 inscribed on it © Author

Inscribed on the aqueduct, overlooking the piazza and the visitors' center, is the Bible passage from Ezekiel 37:14: "I shall put my Spirit into you and you will come to live, and I shall settle you on your own soil." This verse is part of the Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, in which God sets Ezekiel down in a plain full of bones, bones which represent the people of Israel. God asks Ezekiel: "can these bones live?" (Ezek. 37:3), after which God has Ezekiel prophesize the redemption of the people of Israel.

Ezekiel 37:14, in which God talks about the soil, culminates the larger process of the redemption to Israel as prophesized in 37:1-13: before God would settle the 'bones' on their soil, he would first give them sinews, flesh, skin and breath (Ezek. 37:1-13). After having made the 'bones' come to life, they would be resettled on their soil. God makes a promise to the exiled to change their captured state into a restored nation in a land.

Most of the material that visitors encounter in and around Yad Vashem is concrete. Safdie writes that he wanted Yad Vashem to have the feeling of an archeological remnant. For Safdie, "only concrete could achieve a sense of the symbolic extension of the monolithic bedrock, free of joints, mortar, or any other embellishments" (Safdie 2006, 96). Although Ezekiel's prophecy makes Yad Vashem's visitors aware of the redemptive Zionist theme of homecoming, or return, Safdie's choices in architectural design and material nevertheless reflect a displacement. Ockman says: "At Yad Vashem however, the architecture calls the very idea of context into question" (Ockman 2006, 23). Safdie describes how visitors have associated the striped motifs in the visitors' center with the striped uniforms of concentration-camp inmates (Safdie 2006, 96). He did not aim for this particular association, however: "Architecture is not about prescribing what you ought to feel or think" (Safdie 2006, 96).
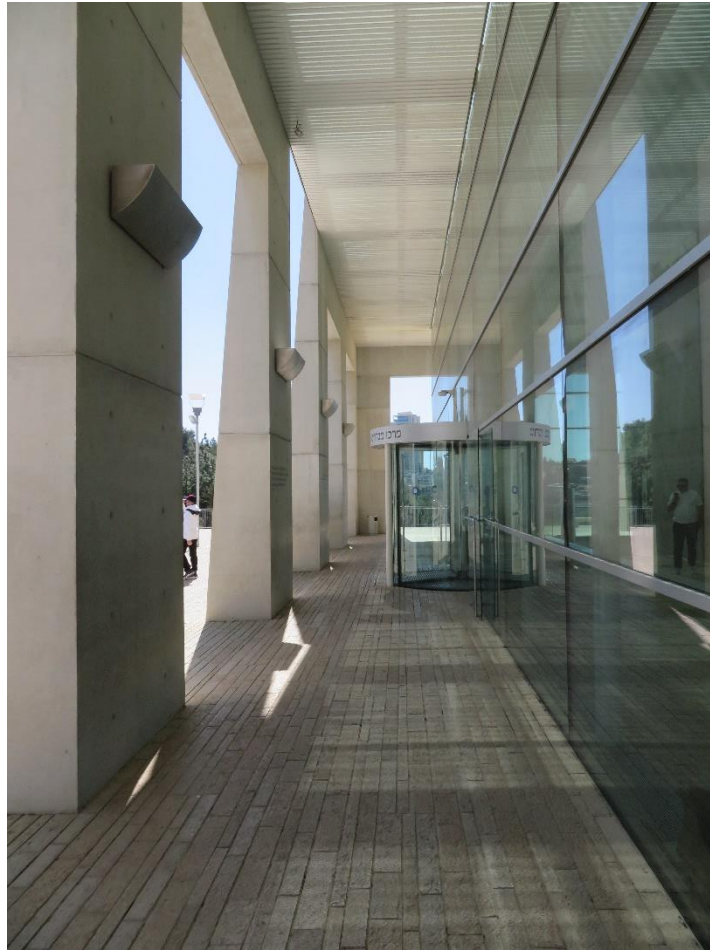
Fig. III The entrance to the visitors' center © Author

Safdie's remarks have bearings on our understanding of the space at Yad Vashem. Specifically, he alludes to an interaction between Yad Vashem as it was conceived by him on the one hand, and how it is perceived by its visitors on the other. With the example he puts forward, of visitors asking him about what he meant and subsequently negating that he meant anything at all, Safdie frames the architecture of Yad Vashem as a recipient of visitors' experiences. In the previous chapter we were introduced to Safdie's ideas on vernacular architecture, as architecture that emerges from and in dialogue with the realities of its environment (Safdie 1970, 244).

In his pioneering work on religion and space, Jonathan Z. Smith asks: "What if space were not the recipient but rather the creation of the human project? What if place were an active product of intellection rather than its passive receptacle?" (Smith 1987, 26). In explicitly negating the premises of visitors' associations with the architecture, in negating any associative architectural intentions, Safdie posits Yad Vashem as a passive receptacle of visitors' impressions.

In Lefebvre's parlance, Safdie frames Yad Vashem as a non-social or natural space that is subsequently socialized by its visitors and their associations (Lefebvre 1991, 220). Such an understanding of space lacks critical engagement. In the last chapter we saw how Yad Vashem, both in its memorials as well as in its architecture, is the product of a particular history, traceable to Safdie's work. More so, space does not exist prior to being social: space is instead continuously produced and reproduced by social forces.

Overall, Safdie downplays the conceptualization of Yad Vashem and stresses its functional qualities. Conceived or conceptualized space comprises representations of space that are conceived, constructed, or imagined by planners, architects, curators, tour guides, and the likes. Instead, according to Safdie, Yad Vashem's architecture leaves visitors free to ascribe any meaning. This agency on the side of the visitor has its limits, however. This becomes especially apparent inside the Holocaust History Museum.

Safdie's description of the visitors' center serves as an example of conceived space and perceived space standing in an unstable, dialectical, relation to each other. In my contention, by the heavy self-description that Yad Vashem engages in, and by bringing forth associations in its publications, Yad Vashem in fact contributes to a conception of space based on its visitors' perception, albeit invertedly. This creates, dialogically, a third type of space, a lived space, that is produced and modified over time and through use, both real-and-imagined (Elden 2007, 111), both mentalist and materialist. On this lived space, Lefebvre writes that it is "space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols [...] This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects" (Lefebvre 1991, 39). How does this bear on our conception of space?

Aria pondered over this issue as we entered the visitors' center. She had read about the association visitors had with uniforms of concentration camp inmates before going to Yad Vashem, and could not ignore it in how she was engaging with the museum architecture. These descriptions of associations, although they are negated, shape her perception of the space. She felt pushed to a particular perception of the space at Yad Vashem. In the introduction, we saw how Zara compared the structure of the visitors' center to the *sukkah*, thereby framing Yad Vashem and its objectives of Holocaust memorialization within a narrative of exile and homecoming.

Regarding the spatial layout in The Prophecy, we encounter multiple boundaries that have to be overcome within this chapter, the start of Yad Vashem's 'spatial composition' (Ockman 2006, 20). Lu describes this chapter and these boundaries as 'rhythmic explorations', inhibiting visitors' impulses to enter straightaway (Lu 2017, 447). The elements that visitors encounter upon entering Yad Vashem – the forest leading up to the entrance gate, Ezekiel's prophecy, and the visitors center – are different but not disconnected. They serve as transitory parts of Yad Vashem. Within this spatial layout leading up the Holocaust History Museum, the ancient text of Ezekiel encounters a modern environment and interacts with these different elements. Having described the verse's origin, I will come back to it when we circle back after our visit.

In positing these different but connected elements, the architectural design foreshadows clues for the following chapters in the story. From here, we cross a transcendental barrier, the level of the earth descends by some degrees on the *Bridge to a Vanished World*. Up until the bridge, we have wandered through a quotidian world. Subsequently, we encounter one that has vanished.

Fig. IV: The gateway to the Holocaust History Museum © Author

The Catastrophe

As we walk over the *Bridge to a Vanished World*, Zara passionately sings the lyrics to "Kol Ha'Olam Kulo" (*The Whole Entire World*) a song by rabbi Baruch Chait (1946): "The whole entire world is a very narrow bridge and the main thing is to have no fear at all." We walk down and reach the southern end of the prismatic structure, cutting through the mountain like an 'archeological scar' (Ockman 2006, 21). We begin with a window to the past with Rovner's *Living Landscape*. In the distance, looking towards the light up north, we have a window to the future (Safdie 2006, 97). Having to make a 180 degree turn from the *Living Landscape* towards the rest of the museum, visitors turn their backs towards the south end, with their backs towards the Jewish world as it was.

Fig. V: The Holocaust History Museum and the *Bridge to a Vanished World* leading to its entrance © Author

Whereas in The Prophecy people could freely roam on the piazza or in the visitor's center, in The Catastrophe people are required to follow one path. The choice to include physical cracks, or ruptures, in the floor of the museum's central corridor, to create 'a closed and prescribed movement pattern' (Harel 2010, 25), 'as if an earthquake ripped it apart' (Safdie 2006, 97) was carefully deliberated and explicated by Yad Vashem's architects and curators (Safdie 2006, Harel 2010). Safdie poses the question: "How do we induce the flow of the public through the storyline as it unfolds?" (Safdie 2006, 97), alluding to an element of persuasion.

By virtue of these ruptures, the human body is induced to engage with the space and narrative in a prescribed way, and thus, the body is disciplined into the museum narrative (Hazard 2013, 61). This is a clear example of the space disciplining, or exerting force, demarcating the visitors' agency. Besides signaling turning points in the history of WWII and the Holocaust, the ruptures in the floor also provide a rhythmic aspect to the walking inside. As noted earlier, the Holocaust History Museum consists of one central linear corridor with asymmetric exhibition galleries integrated on each side. The space in between the exhibition galleries, the central corridor, can thus be said to mediate the historical time: a historical time period and historical events are tied together in a tight spatial sequence. Harel describes this as follows: "I transformed the architectural prism into an ideological timeline of longitude - the axis of historical memory" (Harel 2010, 25). The perception of time in the museum is thus bound inextricably to the bodily movement through its exhibitions.

As with the visitors' center, visitors have had different associations with the prismatic form of the Holocaust History Museum, ranging from a half star of David, to train carriage full of deportees, or even a gas chamber at Treblinka (Ockman 2006, 23). Interesting is that Safdie in his writing again negates all these symbolic associations, and instead points to the functional

character of the shape to maintain a gravitational force (Safdie 2006, 96). We see the same dynamic here as we saw above: we are alerted to an interplay between conceived space and perceived space by way of negating visitors' associations. This departs from the assumption on behalf of the Yad Vashem officials that architecture is free, or void of meaning prior to being socialized by its inhabitants.

This assumption is further explicated in Yad Vashem's writing: "[t]he superabundant play of metaphor unleashed by the abstract architecture sets up an opposition between the freedom of imagination [...] and the non-freedom of facts, lists, maps, statistics, newsreels, body counts" (Ockman 2006, 24). Yad Vashem describes how visitors are free to engage with the architecture, again, assigning no agency to the architecture itself. Instead, the non-freedom lies in the historical exhibitions. Having discussed the relation between the form and content of the museum in the last chapter, where Shalev talked about the curatorial imposition on Safdie, such a stark separation between the architecture and the content of the museum has to be met with a critical eye.

Concerning the architecture of the Holocaust History Museum, my interlocutors did not associate the shape of the central corridor with other shapes or things, but they more so talked about the embodied feelings that they got from it – feelings of claustrophobia, darkness, and unease. The space is thus to be understood through the eyes, in terms of associations, but also through the visceral feelings that the space arouses.

As noted above, with all my interlocutors, the middle of the exhibition was the point where we lost sight of each other. Around me, people were falling tired, literally crashing onto the floor in the central corridor. People were crying. The emotions were high. In the museum, this is the point where people broke with the permitted techniques of walking (Mauss 1973): they broke away from their tour guides, increased their pace to escape, or sat down on the floor, to be then lifted onto their feet by security personnel. Visitors subvert the imposed spatial order (De Certeau 1984), and in doing so reproduce space and install spatial ritual. This point in the museum, where visitors would crash, was in fact anticipated by curators in designing the museum. Harel points this out when she says:

> The museological experience and ability of visitors to grasp and internalize the exhibits fell victim to the curating team's indefatigable desire to display as many artifacts as possible. That, to the best of my professional understanding, was a mistake, reflected in the proverb 'grasp all, lose all' (Harel 2010, 40).

From the exhibition of the Warsaw Ghetto onwards, all my interlocutors felt paralyzed and unable to keep engaging with the museum critically. Most of them instead chose to focus on the audiovisual installments inside. Interestingly, some of them felt a sense of guilt in doing that, they felt responsibility towards the artifacts and towards the museum. Their critical faculties were impeded, turning only to the audiovisual exhibits, turning the museum floor into what Harel calls a 'theme-park experience' (Harel 2010, 42).

We could understand this as a variation of Knott's 'loss of memory'. This feeling of loss of critical power is reverberated by Holocaust survivor Ruth Kluger (1931-2020), who has criticized Holocaust museums in a similar vein, for "they don't take you in, they spit you out. Moreover, they tell you what you ought to think, as no art or science museum ever does. They impede the critical faculty" (Kluger 2003, 198). The amount and nature of the exhibitions inside made my

interlocutors zone out. I too experienced this multiple times. This turning point is instructive with regard to Yad Vashem's responsibility discourses: From the moment that the exhibition becomes too much to bear, all that visitors can do is gaze at the audiovisual artifacts. This can be understood as a practice of collective witness. In bearing witness, visitors are turned into passive observers, voyeurs, and, as I argue, bystanders.

Shalev writes: "The victims peer at us as if seeking a response... and perhaps inspiring us, the visitors, to reflect about personal responsibility" (Shalev 2006, 60). People taking tours in Yad Vashem are confronted with the museum's three-tire division between murderers, bystanders, and rescuers in the history of WWII. An excerpt of German writer Kurt Tucholsky (1890-1935) at the beginning of the exhibition reads: "A country is not just what it does, it is also what it tolerates," alluding to a shared and continuous accountability and responsibility. Through its heavy emotional impact, Yad Vashem turns many of its visitors into passive observers, unable to do anything but watch. The museum effectively induces you into the position of the bystander, inducing shared responsibility through paralyzing its visitors through the heavy emotional impact the museum makes. Walking the tight rope between collaboration and resistance, visitors to Yad Vashem face a moral choice.

Turned into bystanders, visitors are admonished to take up responsibility, and, like my tour guide Avram said earlier, to 'be like the righteous'. Another example of the construction of this bystander narrative (Goldberg 2017) is the exhibition of the confessional poem "First they came" by German theologian and resistance fighter Martin Niemöller (1892-1984). The poem is about the silence of German intellectuals following the Nazi's rise to power:

> First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—
> Because I was not a socialist.
> Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—
> Because I was not a trade unionist.
> Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
> Because I was not a Jew.
> Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

> Martin Niemöller, "First they came" (1946)

Adding to Niemöller's poem, in the museum we read an excerpt from a Imre Bathary, a Hungarian who saved Jews in WWII:

> I know that when I stand before God on Judgment 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 Bathary, Righteous Among the Nations, Hungary

This quote, which draws a parallel to the story of Cain's murder of Abel from the Book of Genesis, adds a religious dimension to the role of bystanders in WWII. Together with the quote on display by Tucholsky and Niemöller, the exhibition admonishes visitors to take up responsibility by way of pointing to the dangers in a role as a bystander. The bystander indictment

is invoked as an emotional reminder upon which Yad Vashem hangs explicit moral teachings of responsibility.

The Redemption

The Catastrophe comes to an end at the viewers' balcony, where the final chapter begins. Here, the sides of the museum walls unfold into the landscape of the hillsides ahead. Safdie concludingly writes:

> To stand on the extended terrace, the side walls of the prism curving away from the site seemingly into infinity, and see the fresh green of the recently planted forest with its great sense of renewal and the urbanizing hills beyond is to understand that, indeed, life prevailed. We prevailed (Safdie 2006, 99).

Nullified and pacified by the museum's exhibitions, and admonished to take up responsibility in remembering, this powerful mise-en-scène makes a deep emotional impact on most of the visitors. Although I had seen the balcony more than ten times near the end of my stay in Israel, after every visit I felt urged to write about the viewers' balcony – I was drawn to it. After the emotionally demanding exhibit, the balcony comes reassuring, relieving. After my first visit to Yad Vashem in 2019, I felt that the museum exhibition behind me strongly colored my perception of the view in front of me: 'Thank God there is a happy ending to all of this', I thought.

Fig. VI: View from the viewers' balcony, overlooking the hill Giv'at Beroshim © Author

Standing on the balcony back then in 2019, I strongly sympathized with a Zionist discourse of redemption in homecoming. This was a brief moment, in which I felt how I enveloped two distinct spaces – the Holocaust History Museum behind me and the view in front of me – into the same understanding (Dijkstra 2022). It was an uncritical moment, indeed, a moment of memory loss. But what could I do but sympathize with the narrative, coming from the encapsulating darkness, stepping into the light, answering death with life?

Safdie's description of the balcony as a 'life-affirming experience' particularly resonates here (Safdie 2006, 99). Ockman describes the balcony as follows: "The cathartic opening at the end of the processional conjures up the biblical tabernacle, a pair of wings, the exultant blast of a horn or trumpet" (Ockman 2006, 23). As with the visitors' center that Zara compared to the *sukkah*, here again, we find that the Holocaust History Museum is framed within a narrative of exile and homecoming. Indeed, the course of the visitor's body through the space of Yad Vashem so far supports these connections. Notably in this regard is the initial, unrealized design plan for the museum's balcony: originally, Safdie had designed the outwardly curving edges to represent spread out hands. This idea was abandoned for several reasons, but the rationale remains intact: through the opening of the museum structure, Jerusalem is staged and, indeed, almost viscerally presented as the final exhibit of the Holocaust History Museum. The history of the Holocaust opens up to the State of Israel. The State of Israel is the redemptive ending to the catastrophe experienced in exile. It is, indeed, a Zionist homecoming.

Earlier, the prismatic structure of the Holocaust History Museum was described as an archeological scar, which is, in Ockman's words, 'symbolically healed by the landscape itself' (Ockman 2006, 21). Playing with these healing properties of the surrounding landscape, Safdie rises the illusion of an interplay between something social and something natural. The interaction between the museum and the balcony, from a prescribed and mandated produced space to a 'natural space', is significant. From the darkness in the museum, we are literally guided towards the light. In the previous chapter, we saw how Safdie had deliberated this interplay between darkness and light in *The Children's Memorial* as well. Homi Bhabha argues that this interaction between darkness and light emphasizes 'the quality of light [and] the power of the eye to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation' (Bhabha 1990, 295). In this, Lefebvre's earlier comment on an uncritical acceptance of spatial reality due to the interplay between narrative and landscape reverberates. For, implicit in this view is that we walk out into natural space, while in fact, it is extremely produced. The implicit spatial story constructed via this interplay is one that connects the Holocaust to the state of Israel, and underwrites a Zionist discourse of catastrophe-and-redemption (Segev 1991, 421-445).
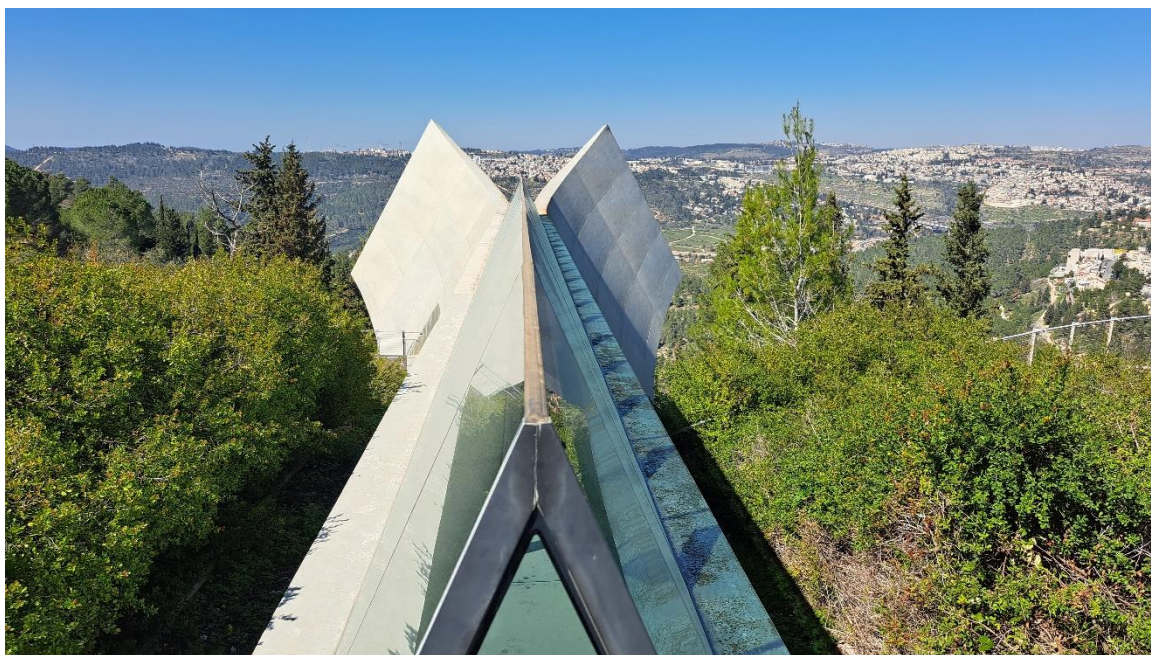
Fig. VII: An 'exultant blast of a horn'. The ending of the Holocaust History Museum from above © Author

After the balcony we cross the *Bridge of Life*. At last, we walk back into the real world, after crossing another barrier of separation. Like in the beginning of the walk, Safdie's design techniques, using light and physical barriers, spatially mark off a special place from its surroundings, emphasizing its different quality. I wait for my walking partners at the end of the *Bridge of Life*. From the vanished world, I see them coming back into the world as we know it.

Whereas on the balcony visitors silently contemplated their visit, once having crossed the *Bridge to Life*, conversation sparks up. My interlocutors are eager to talk about their what they have experienced. All of their initial reactions were visceral experiences: pain, dizziness, or loss of time perception or concentration. None of us had it made it through unaffected. Aria came out and asked: "I wonder, what can you do?" As we walk from the bridge to the courtyard, on the wall we see inscribed "I, with upright heart, freely offer all these things," from 1 Chronicles 29.17, written on the wall above a list of donators. It seems like we are offered an answer straight away.

We start to circle back to the piazza, over the *Valley of the Righteous Among the Nations*. Looking at the young trees that are inscribed with the names of Righteous Gentiles, the trees spark our 'moral imagination' (Fernandez 1998, 85) of the eternal life that they symbolize (Rival 1998, 3). The trees, humanized with the names of Righteous Gentiles, observe us as we walk, making us feel aware, again, of our passive roles as bystanders. On our right we see a stunning view of Jerusalem, with engraved next to it on a stone: "The name of the Lord is a fortified tower. The righteous run to it and are safe," from Proverbs 18.10.

The walk is circular, and eventually the path leads us to the visitors' center, where we can see other visitors embarking on the *Bridge to a Vanished World*. This serves as another example of the rhythmic exploration of Yad Vashem's landscape, where visitors leaving are reminded of the narrative they have just encountered. On our way out of the visitors' center, we are admonished to continue to remember: "Has the like of this happened in your days or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, and let your children tell theirs, and their children the next generation!" from 1 Joel 2-3. We walk back onto the piazza, where Ezekiel awaits us.

Then we start talking. Coming to Yad Vashem that morning, Hannah had told me on the light train how, recently, she was harshly criticized for coming to Israel as a European, and that she was supposedly guilty for what happened to the Jews. Coming to Yad Vashem in the morning, she laughed about this accusation. Having gone through the exhibition, she now feels guilty for being at Yad Vashem, and feels out of place. Despite all of my interlocutors having had carefully deliberated reasons for coming to Yad Vashem, at the end of the visit all of them felt out of place, and literally disoriented. The museum did not take us in, it spat us out.

Starting the conversation, I could feel that we were just coming out, and that the spatial order they encountered exerted force over them, in a similar way as I had been strongly affected after my first visit: 'Thank God there is a happy ending to all of this.' As with me, my interlocutors' attitudes softened, and all of them described their concentration and critical mindset having left them in the middle of the museum. Aria recalls a video testimony from right after the liberation of the concentration camps, where a Jewish survivor says to her liberator: 'But now we do not have the power to live anymore.' For Aria, this resonated with how she felt coming out of the museum: "Although we came from darkness into the light, I did not feel liberated,"[45] she says. She relates the two types of liberation, and in doing so identifies with the historical as well as the spatial narrative of the museum. Ruth 'forgot all about the discourse of being critical of Israel'[46] on the inside, and on the piazza she says how, despite being critical of Israel, she never thought so much about the idea of a state in relation to the Holocaust.

As our conversations progressed, my interlocutors reasserted themselves and engaged with their experience critically. Coming from their primary visceral experiences inside the museum, towards the end all of them conceptualized their encounter with the museum narrative within larger narratives. Notably, towards the end of our conversation, I ask Hannah if she still feels guilty for being here. The answer is no. Indie compares Yad Vashem to the rest of Jerusalem, talking about the interconnections: "I do not understand the connection between this mountain and the rest [of Jerusalem]. The feeling of empathy that I have up here is different from what happens down there."[47] Similarly, Ruth relates the feeling out of place in Yad Vashem to the Ultra-Orthodox neighborhood in West Jerusalem. My interlocutors did not experience the site as a sealed container of experience. Instead, they weave them into broader understandings of the city, placing it in dialogue with it (Reynolds 2018, 196).

Whereas I was hoping to talk about the presence of religion in and around the museum, my interlocutors were drawn to the political aspect of the narrative that they signaled. They did not assign particular value to the religious symbolisms there. Instead, they felt the religious presence as a generic, self-explanatory presence: "It is common sense that it is here: it is all integrated in the narrative," Aria says casually. Interestingly, whereas my interlocutors accept the biblical presence in Yad Vashem at face value, or even take it for granted (Shields 1999, 162-163), they do pay special attention to the Zionist aspect of the museum narrative.

An idea that multiple of my interlocutors reverberated was that there is a balance inside the museum between 'what is true' and 'what is a tool'. At once, they were being presented with a 'true' account of the Holocaust, and they were being presented with a government tool, a particular political agenda. More so, the political character of Yad Vashem for some discredited

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the historical narrative: "Although I empathize with the Jewish victims through Yad Vashem, I feel that this will not make any changes in the fight against racism. Because it is all politicized,"[48] Indie says. The commemorative objectives of empathy and identification for Indie were not effective because of the clearly politicized narrative of the museum.

Fig. VIII: The piazza after circling back from the museum. All interviews were held on the bench to the right © Author

How does Ezekiel, back on the piazza, figure in our spatial story? Notably, Ezekiel is facing the people leaving Yad Vashem. He is not facing those coming in. This is instructive because it points to the circular narrative of Yad Vashem. No doubt Ezekiel's prophecy comes comforting. Upon entering, in reading Ezekiel we encountered a dialectical relationship between death and redemption. Not only is the path that we embarked imbued with a religious significance merely because of the Bible passage's presence. Indeed, the prophesizing nature of Ezekiel 37:14 and the Valley of Dry Bones lends itself for a (dis)placement of the passage within a spatial story of catastrophe-and-redemption that emerges from the interplay between narrative and landscape 'down the road'. The Valley of Dry Bones is a story of a redemption yet to come. The fact that the historical 'redemption' of the Jewish people only came after the Holocaust, in 1948 with the establishment of the State of Israel, makes Ezekiel 37:14 and its context susceptible for a reading that cuts right through time, that includes the Holocaust (Kugel 1997, xiv). In Yad Vashem's spatial storytelling, the 'plain full of bones' in Ezekiel 37 becomes an ahistorical plain, that stretches from the Babylonian landscapes to the ruins of Auschwitz.

The (dis)placement of the Bible passages onto the landscape of Yad Vashem recharges the verses with Jewish horror lived in the near past. Through spatial storytelling, the biblical is thus (dis)placed into an Israeli national discourse, but this national discourse is likewise (dis)placed into the biblical. This reciprocal process of narration and (dis)placement in Yad Vashem's spatial storytelling blurs any sharp distinction between the 'religious' text and the 'non-religious' in Yad Vashem. Indeed, the text Ezekiel 37:14 is constitutive of the spatial story that Yad Vashem tells, and the spatial story of Yad Vashem is likewise constitutive of a reading of Ezekiel 37:14. This

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[48] Interview with Indie, March 6 2023, Jerusalem.

obfuscating of dividing lines between the 'religious' and the 'non-religious' within the spatial landscape of Yad Vashem brings us closer to the argument that we have encountered in the first chapter, where Yad Vashem's chairman, curator and tour guide negated the presence of religion *as* religion at Yad Vashem.

Within this ahistorical plain visitors encounter several other Bible passages along the way, admonishing them to remember, connoting territory in talking about the land of Israel, or giving a biblical touch to museum donators. In this and the previous chapter, we have seen how discourses on sacrality occupy a prominent place in Yad Vashem, both in its landscape, its architecture, and in oral and written form. Having built the argument so far, we can concludingly say that there is an installment of the sacred at Yad Vashem. This installment we now have to question, for what does it mean? And what does it do? What does the interface between the biblical and Holocaust memory mean for the study of both?

'Yad Vashem': From Temple to Memorial

As I argue on the basis on the analysis of Yad Vashem's spatial storytelling, there is a reciprocal (dis)placement of religious narrative, Holocaust memory, and the Israeli political reality at play on the Yad Vashem grounds. The (dis)placement of passages onto the landscape of Yad Vashem charges the landscape with biblical overtones. At the same time, the historical and political reality of Yad Vashem's landscape, a reality of the Holocaust, and of the state of Israel, reflects back onto the passages that figure in Yad Vashem. The religious text and the museum narrative collide, to produce a specific interface of the biblical and Holocaust memory.

In the chapter, we have seen how this interface is played out in spatial terms. At once on the physical landscape of Yad Vashem, as well as in its architecture, and its discourses, we see either flirtatious or very straightforward meetings between the two.

Coming to the Bible passages discussed here, we can discuss them in multiple ways. Firstly, we can ask the question what these passages mean in this particular environment, and try to contextualize them within the spatial context of Yad Vashem. As I have described for Ezekiel 37:14 above, we could say that all of the passages that we have encountered are decontextualized from a historical continuum. In entering into a 'new' domain, the biblical readily alters its form. Thus, we could stipulate that the Bible passage above the list of museum donators attaches a transcendental meaning to the act of donating. Similarly, we could take Proverbs 18.10, "The name of the Lord is a fortified tower. The righteous run to it and are safe," in the *Valley of the Righteous Among the Nations*, to imply that gentiles are morally right in ascribing to Jewish culture. The specific Bible passages that we encounter also raise questions over the authorial voice. Who is speaking here, and to whom? Is it God, is it the victims of the Holocaust, or is it Yad Vashem? In the case of the tour guide reverberating the Sanhedrin, we have seen how the authorial voice is fluid. We see that there is a fluidity to the canonical form.

The name 'Yad Vashem', coming from Isaiah 56:5 "And I will give them a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever," too raises questions about the authorial voice. In Yad Vashem's self-framing, the memorial exclusively uses the first part of the verse: "And I will give them a memorial and a name." In the introduction, I said that the scriptural promise of immortality of Isaiah 56:5 will be fulfilled by those who pay Yad Vashem a visit. Isaiah 56:5 indicates the promise of God to the pious eunuchs (castrated men) to build a memorial for

them in God's city, Jerusalem. Another way to interpret the analogy is that 'Yad Vashem' casts victims of the Holocaust as eunuchs and Yad Vashem as a new temple. Tom Segev has argued that the omission of the second part of the verse: "better than sons and daughters," is important because this second part strikes an uncomfortable note, suggesting that remembrance is more important than life (Segev 1991, 424). Whatever the rationale for omitting the last part, it is instructive to see that Yad Vashem shows deference to the canonical form of the Bible. Ironically, the verse has to be cut off mid-way in order to work.

The potential pitfall of such close readings, however, could be described as falling into an eisegesis (Breed 2014, 6). This is only useful till such an extent, for people have vastly different associations with these specific texts. It is not the present task to think about what exactly these passages mean in this context. To ask what the passages mean would be to gloss over their function in Yad Vashem's spatialization of Holocaust memory. Interrelatedly and more importantly, to talk about a '(dis)placement' of text carries an ideological assumption within it that these texts are, to begin with, taken out of their contexts and are placed somewhere else.

This idea of an 'original context' to the passages obscures rigorous analysis. In coming to Yad Vashem, I initially sensed something unsettled about the passages being there. Brennan Breed talks about 'nomadic quality' of Bible verses (Breed 2014, 203). His model focuses on text as an entity that alters upon encounter with new situations. Tollerton describes the Bible not merely as a "compendium of text, but also an idea," which, in some instances, "may come to haunt and inhabit other content" (Tollerton 2017, 583). Instead of asking what they mean, we might also ask what they do. What does the installment of biblical motifs and symbolism *do* to Yad Vashem?

Our second way of approaching this, therefor, could be to ask in which way the interface between the biblical and Holocaust memory at Yad Vashem creates a space for the sacred where we, in religious studies, might not expect it. This brings us to the analytical way of understanding sacrality in relation to the Holocaust. The quantity or quality of verses does not really matter, for, as Tollerton argues, a biblical *idea* has already done its work (Tollerton 2017, 588).

Biblical citation has been mobilized to install sacrality on the museum grounds – from holy text to physical landmark. Throughout, we have seen how notions of the sacred are well in place in Yad Vashem. We can ask ourselves how the sacred is constituted, authorized and perceived, and how these notions of sacrality play a role in remembrance and Holocaust representation. In the previous chapters, we have seen how sacrality has been carefully produced, is reproduced and authenticated in Yad Vashem. This obfuscates the boundaries between what we might call religion, and what not.

Concluding Remarks

Embarking on our walk over one of Yad Vashem's 'strong paths', in this chapter I have argued that Yad Vashem's spatial storytelling departs from an entanglement of different narratives, creating an interface between a prophetic past, a catastrophic history, and a redemptive present. Traffic runs both ways on the museum's paths, giving transcendental overtones to the museum, whilst simultaneously imbuing the Bible passages that figure on the landscape with Jewish horrors lived in the near past.

Throughout the three chapters of Yad Vashem's spatial story, we have seen how perceived space and conceived space are in constant dialogue with each other. Interestingly, Yad Vashem presents the architecture of the place to be free for the imagination. What is more, Safdie

explicitly denies any associative intent in the architectural choices, positing Yad Vashem as a passive receptacle. Although Safdie adheres to integrative, vernacular architecture, it is as if Yad Vashem came falling from the sky. Instead of uncritically subscribing to this view, in this chapter we have seen how the museum architecture disciplines its visitors into Yad Vashem's spatial narrative. The analysis in the previous chapter, in which Shalev pointed out how the curatorial and museological concepts were imposed onto the architectural planning of Yad Vashem in the early 2000s, further enforces the argument that the spatial order visitors encounter exerts substantial force over them. Inside the Holocaust History Museum, visitors face heavy emotional impact which does not leave them unaffected. The design inside the museum is such that midway through, visitors lose their critical faculty and chose to focus on the audiovisual material instead. The museum thus turns its visitors into bystanders.

Chapter IV: Stories of a New Bible – The Holocaust in Religious Studies

"**B**ut are they themselves not stories of a new Bible?" asks Italian novelist and Holocaust survivor Primo Levi (1919-1987) in his 1958 book *If This Is a Man*, in describing the horrendous stories of a fellow concentration camp inmate (Levi 1987 [1958], 71-72). Implicit in Levi's question is a presupposed fluidity in biblical quality, or, a biblical *idea*.

The question that Levi poses is useful to guide us in this short final chapter for two interrelated reasons. Firstly, in the previous chapters we have seen how notions of sacrality are well in place in Yad Vashem. Through biblical and transcendental motifs and themes in its writing and oral discourse, as well as in its landscape, Yad Vashem cloaks itself in a biblical garb. The above analysis thus compels us to take seriously categories of the biblical and the sacred in Yad Vashem. Secondly, Levi's question fundamentally bears on our understanding of the biblical and religion itself, and compels us to consider the fluidity and transferability as opposed to the fixity and originality of these concepts. At once, our analysis of Yad Vashem makes us take seriously categories of the sacred, but it also demands a reflexive turn inward, and urges us to reflect on conceptualizations of religion and on the disciplinary boundaries of religious studies.

This last chapter therefor reflects on the interface of the biblical and Holocaust memory for an understanding of the infusion of religion into Yad Vashem's commemorative practices, and for the implications of this interface on the location of religion. The stark opposition between the arguments that Yad Vashem's officials bring forward on the absence of religion *as* religion at Yad Vashem on the one hand, as opposed to the omnipresence of religious symbolism, motifs and biblical language at Yad Vashem on the other, compels us to critically reexamine these categories. Taking inspiration from Levi's 'stories of a new Bible', I argue that through taking seriously the idea of transferable 'biblical quality' we can meaningfully align our scholarly voices with the emic perspectives of Yad Vashem's officials and inquire deeper insight into the installment of sacrality in Yad Vashem.

To start, I revisit some important tendencies in debates on the Holocaust in relation to sacrality, both within post-Holocaust Jewish thought, as well as the scholarly field of biblical reception studies. I reflect this historical interface of the biblical and Holocaust memory against my ethnographic findings. In discussing this, I take Brennan Breed's notion of 'nomadology' as a guiding concept. Breed approaches biblical text as nomads that neither have a fixed origin nor destination, but in fact, keep altering upon encountering new contexts and domains (Breed 2014, 3). Through problematizing the notion of 'original (con)text', I reflect on what Breed's discussion on nomadology could mean for an understanding of the sacred in relation to Holocaust memory. Breed's discussion on the transferability of text and sacrality leads me to revisit my initial engagement with religion at Yad Vashem, continuing the reflexive deliberations from the first chapter. I elaborate on my changing story of religion at Yad Vashem, based on the findings from the previous chapters.

The analysis of religion at Yad Vashem destabilizes a conceptualization of 'religion' as a distinctive phenomenon on the Holocaust remembrance site. Rather, our empirical data invite us to see how religious or biblical motifs and symbolisms merge with other modes of thought and

in doing so, give rise to new intersections between different fields of study. The strand of sacralization running through Yad Vashem's commemorative practices obfuscates the disciplinary boundaries between Holocaust studies and religious studies. But how are we to engage with these boundaries, for are the stories the stories of the Holocaust themselves not stories of a new Bible?

Searching for the Original (Con)Text

Holocaust remembrance has long interacted with the biblical. The very name 'Holocaust' itself, deriving from the Greek word for 'sacrifice' (*holokaustos*) attests to the deep intertwinement between the two. In the 1930s and 1940s themselves, religious figures appealed to biblical ideas and language to make sense of their situations (Greenberg 2005). The latter half of the 20th century, and the 1960s especially, saw an upsurge in Jewish theologians, artists and commentators who all, in various overtones, interweaved biblical references into their works on the Holocaust.

In the introduction to the research we already encountered several Jewish voices who ascribe sacred or even revelatory value to the Holocaust. In discussing Fackenheim and Wiesel, I described their way of talking about the Holocaust as sacred as a normative approach to sacrality. Time and space do not allow me to cite examples in plenty, but these claims on the sacrality surrounding the Holocaust have been reverberated deeply in various post-Holocaust cultural contexts. In the American context, Novick argues that a "de facto sacralization of the Holocaust" has taken place (Novick 1999, 35).

The explicit idea in these voices, voices that argue that the Holocaust holds sacred or revelatory status, for example, is that there no fundamental historical discontinuity between prophetic times, and that of the Holocaust. Indeed, sacrality is perceived as something ahistorical, and the Holocaust is subsequently drawn into a divine, 'timeless', order. How does this play out in the museum context? In the previous chapter I argued that the presence of the Bible passages and the biblical garb at Yad Vashem both de-historicize these biblical elements, as well as they de-historicize the Holocaust itself. The implicit presuppositions in these different claims on the relation between the Holocaust and the sacred are worthwhile to reflect on, for competing views are at play: whereas these emic voices comfortably involve the Holocaust in their understanding of the sacred and revelation, I initially signaled a strangeness in this, perceived the presence of the biblical to be a matter out-of-place in Yad Vashem, and conceptualized it as a (dis)placement. How can we conceptualize these differences, and meaningfully move between emic and etic perspectives?

The interactions between the biblical and the Holocaust call into question the boundaries between them in the scholarly fields of Bible studies and religious studies. Although post-Holocaust thought has been a serious topic within the scholarly field of Bible reception studies, the field of study rests on a fundamental assumption that clouds an understanding of the complexities of the interactions between the Bible and the Holocaust. This relates to the place of 'text' within biblical studies. Breed argues that Bible reception studies traditionally have been dominated by opinions in which religious text is seen as out-of-place when interacting with modern environments (Breed 2014, 5). Although the interaction between the ancient text and its modern environment has been a topic of study, biblical studies has been characterized by a focus on the canonical form and context of the Bible (Tollerton 2017, 576). Even though biblical scholars have pointed out the nearness or analogous character between biblical and modern

events, this nearness is nevertheless stipulated on an ontological distance between the ancient and the modern.

For example, in his entry on 'Holocaust' in the *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (1999), Tod Linafelt writes with "the guiding conviction ... that these two – ancient text and modern atrocity – can, and indeed must, be brought to bear on one another" (Linafelt 1999, 514-515), departing from a differentness between the two. Along similar lines, in *Reading the Bible After the Shoah* (2008), Marvin Sweeney opens with the reflection that "the Hebrew Bible considers events analogous to the Shoah [...] in relation to its understanding of G-d, Israel/Judah, and the nations of the world at large" (Sweeney 2008, 1). Likewise, 'analogous' implies a nearness imbedded within an unbridgeable distance.

Tollerton argues that post-Holocaust Bible studies depart from a presupposed distinction between the ancient text and the modern atrocity (Tollerton 2017, 579). In this reasoning, the meaning of a text is to be found against the background of developments in the ancient world, not its modern contexts. The Holocaust may provoke new ways of understanding the Bible, but the text is viewed fundamentally as the product of the ancient. Similarly, Paul Ricœur (1913-2005) suggests a tripartite model for biblical criticism, in which he distinguishes between (1) the world behind the text, (2) the world in the text, and (3) the world in front of the text (Ricœur 1976, 87-94). The 'world behind the text' refers to the context of the text's production. The 'world in the text' refers to the text itself, and the 'world in front of the text' refers to the later contexts in which the text was received. Ricœur's scheme has apparent merit in that it establishes constitutive boundaries between author, text, and reader. Yet, while Ricœur's 'worlds' might bestow order and coherence upon biblical scholarship, his boundaries obfuscate the complicated zones in between these worlds. This presupposed distinction between an original (con)text and modern context is problematic, for it alienates the academic focus of inquiry from the lived religious reality of sacred persistence (Smith 1982).

Our analysis points to the omnipresence of religion at Yad Vashem. How can we engage with these points of view, and bridge the conceptual gap between religious text and its reception? Back in 2019, I held the firm conviction that religion was being instrumentalized in Yad Vashem's spatial story. Even during my fieldwork in 2023, I was conceptualizing religion's presence at Yad Vashem in terms of 'appropriation', assuming an incommensurable divide between religion and the rest. Indeed, in talking about the (dis)placement of Bible passages onto the landscape of Yad Vashem, and in trying to contextualize them, I still depart from an unsurmountable distance between these ancient passages and their modern environment. But, why not say that religion is part and parcel of Yad Vashem's story, indispensable from it? Through spatial analysis, I have presented arguments for understanding it as such. How do we let go of the ultimate otherness of religion?

The Nomadic Bible and the Biblical *Idea*

Coming back to Primo Levi, descriptions of witness testimonies as 'stories of a new Bible' work directly against the idea of original (con)text. Rather, to ask whether something can be or become of biblical stature, attests to the conviction that the Bible, or the biblical, can alter from its form when entering a new domain. Biblical quality is perceived as something transferable. The biblical can be thought of as a transferable *type*, and so too can the sacred. Or in other words, Ezekiel's plain full of dry bones might in fact be conceived as ahistorical for its believers. So too

might Yad Vashem, separated by countless physical boundaries from its surroundings, be perceived as a place outside the bounds of historical time.

We have seen examples of the biblical as a transferable type throughout this research. The partial deployment of the canonical form of the Bible in Yad Vashem's usage of Isaiah 56:5 attests to this transferability, or fluidity. We can similarly approach the Bible verses above donators' lists as a transfer of biblical quality. So too do we encounter fluidity and transferability in tour guides incorporating religious or biblical ideas in their understanding of remembrance at Yad Vashem based on the Sanhedrin.

As for Ezekiel 37:14, theologian Amelia Rebecca Basdeo-Hill has offered a compelling argument for understanding the book of Ezekiel as a text that, through its sensorial imagery of seeing, hearing, and experiencing, summons its hearers to see and hear the scripture afresh, and to engage with scripture anew (Basdeo-Hill 2018, 547-548). Basdeo-Hill offers a theological argument for engaging with Ezekiel in specific, and the Bible in general, as living and dynamic entities, as a means "to encounter the living God in the written word of God" (Basdeo-Hill 2018, 548).

Letting go of the Bible as something which is ultimately other, and seeing the fluidity in the biblical idea, allows us to see the hinterland where the biblical merges with other modes of thought. Letting go of a canonical focus, this brings us closer to understanding the emic perspectives at Yad Vashem. A fruitful way of understanding these Bible verses is as 'nomads', argues Breed:

> Nomads do not come from any fixed point, and neither are they headed toward any fixed point... For the nomad, there is no origin and no endpoint. Even for nomads who follow traditional routes, any point at which he or she stops to rest is no more home than anywhere else. But neither is it less home than anywhere else. Home is a process – the road itself. movement and change *is* the sedentary state (Breed 2014, 203).

Along similar lines then, do we not only look at a nomadic Bible, but by virtue of this at a biblical *idea* as well. Apart from Jewish voices arguing for the sacrality of the Holocaust, so do we encounter the idea that witness testimonies or historical records amount to biblical documents. For example, the Orthodox rabbi Elizier Berkovits (1908-1992) has stated that "[w]hen one day the last written messages from the ghettoes and the death camps will be assembled in an edition worthy of their truth and inspiration, mankind will possess in them a new collection of holy scriptures" (Berkovits 1973, 78). Berkovits prophecy points to the fact that biblical quality is perceived as something transferable, (dis)placeable, and nomadic.

Breed's notion of nomadology is a useful concept because it further accommodates an understanding of how notions of sacrality and the religious function within and give rise to a social reality of Holocaust commemoration at Yad Vashem. Concerning Yad Vashem's landscape, the material essence of a nomadic Bible, a nomadic sacred, or a nomadic religion, further underscores how these notions of sacrality and the religious are part of the aesthetic paradigms that organize the bodily experience of visitors to Yad Vashem.

In the case of Yad Vashem's landscape, in the previous chapter we have seen how biblical quality is transferred in multiple ways. In one way, biblical quality is transferred onto the landscape of Yad Vashem and into Yad Vashem's spatial storytelling. As we have seen, the strand of

sacralization running through Yad Vashem not only pertains to text. Rather, we find that sacred categories impose themselves on reception as a named type. In this process, the biblical idea comes to inhabit other content, such as physical landmarks, and architectural design. Inhabited by nomadic texts, and countless variations on biblical idea, stories of a new Bible might have indeed been constructed at Yad Vashem.

Questioning Boundaries between Holocaust Memory and Religious Studies

The above discussion, and the relation between text and reception that characterizes the field of Bible studies, compels us to ask: how are scholarly notions of text and religion deeply intertwined? And what does this obscure rather than illuminate?

In the first chapter I posed the reflexive premise of the research, namely that 'religion' is not a phenomenon 'out there', but that it is rather constructed in the act of investigation. Scholars of religion have since the 1990s answered to this insight in various ways, all seeking to denaturalize the concept of 'religion', and to reconstruct it from the bottom-up. William Arnal suggests to look at the function of religion from *within*: "The academic future of religion as a concept will need to focus on deconstructing the category and analyzing its function within popular discourse, rather than assuming that the category has content and seeking to specify what that content is" (Arnal 2000, 30). How do we further denaturalize the concept, to work against the reduction looming?

Coming from the above discussion on 'stories of a new Bible', for the religious studies scholar there lies an inescapable tension in going along with Levi's rational. This is a tension between subscribing to the sacred character of the Holocaust and acknowledging the legitimacy of 'stories of a new Bible' on the one hand, and altogether delegitimizing the Holocaust's sacrality for scholarly purposes on the other. Indeed, this is a tension between not offering a straightforwardly theological read on the one hand, nor a dogmatically social-scientific one on the other. This issue, of moving between the poles of emic and etic accounts of religion, precipitated the rise of the phenomenology of religion, and continues to inform the field of religious studies (King 2017, 3).

Increasingly, scholars of religion make a move towards interdisciplinarity in facing these issues. Tollerton too argues that the interface of the Bible and Holocaust memory calls for a softening of disciplinary lines (Tollerton 2017). Andrew Haas, however, notes that interdisciplinarity is mainly a rhetorical phenomenon within academia, and he stresses that disciplinary boundaries ought to remain if the academia wants to continue to function as it does (Haas 2003, 4-5). Similarly, Smith argues that 'religion' establishes the 'disciplinary horizon' for religious studies, just as 'language' establishes this horizon for linguistics: "There can be no disciplined study of religion without such a horizon" (Smith 1998, 281). But what is this horizon, this shared point of orientation, exactly? King argues that different approaches to religion not so much reflect different lenses through which we can study religion, but rather reflect diverse attempts to construct the concept of 'religion' itself. In light of this, King argues that what in fact unites religious studies scholars – the shared horizon – is a "commitment to the reproduction of the language game of religion itself," continuing that "[s]ustained scholarly conversation about 'religion' is itself what constitutes the field of the study of religion (King 2017, 7). The notions 'religion', 'religious', or 'sacred' are as much part of a conceptual toolbox as they are objects of investigation themselves (Balkenhol et al. 2020, 2).

These theoretical questions with regard to the field need not halt us, however, in engaging with the installment of the sacred within the context of Holocaust memory, and indeed, in thinking

along (rhetorical) interdisciplinary lines. This brings us back to our discussion from the first chapter, where I introduced 'heritage religion' as a means to understanding the nature and location of religion at Yad Vashem. Various commentators have addressed the interface of the Bible and Holocaust memory and the Holocaust in relation to sacrality in terms of 'civil religion' since the 1980s. Although 'civil religion' was coined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) in the 18th century, sociologist Robert Bellah (1927-2013) popularized the term in his 1967 text *Civil Religion in America*. He argues that the sacred extends far beyond traditional religions and religious systems into narratives, symbols and structures of the state (Bellah 1967, 1).

In *Civil Religion in Israel* (1983) Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya consider "the centrality of the Holocaust as the primary political myth of Israeli society" (Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1983, 7). Hansen-Glucklich, working with the notion of 'civil religion', argues that Holocaust museums work to reinforce their host nation's 'political myths' (Hansen-Glucklich 2014). Although there is a big definitional gap in the deployment of 'civil religion' (Tollerton 2020, 181), what the divergent work on the concept shows is that 'civil religion' provides a useful tool for thinking through the ways in which Holocaust memory and sacrality interact, and how they are integrated in social and political structures. Despite 'civil religion' having gone out of fashion in academia, with Bellah abandoning the term himself, the underlying dynamics of the transferability of the sacred remain intact: biblical quality is mobilized in such a way as to transfer sacrality to the physical landmarks of, for example, the museum. Avril Alba argues: "the Holocaust has now been *eternalized* ... Once 'secular' history is [now] cloaked in the 'timeless' garb of the sacred" (Alba 2015, 193).

Alba's distinction between secular and sacred alerts us back to the arguments we have encountered in the first chapter on the non-religious character of Yad Vashem. In the first chapter I described this discourse as 'religion as cultural heritage'. We have seen how the biblical garb of Yad Vashem is not a hard one to wear. In fact, both my interlocutors from the walks and the officials stress the common sense character to them. The deployment of the sacred in Yad Vashem hence can be understood as a unifying national symbol (Burchardt 2020, 195). Several scholars have pointed to the affinity between the 'cultural religion' paradigm and the 'civil religion' paradigm (Laniel 2016, 378).

Along these lines of configuration of religion and memory, sociologist Jean Séguy (1925-2007) coined the term 'metaphorical religion', approaching religion as a dissemination of the sacred and its functionalist interpretations, which allows one to find modern religion everywhere where rituals, beliefs and effervescence are found (Séguy 1988, 179). Séguy points to the reciprocal workings between 'modern' metaphorical religion and 'historical' religion, for if metaphorical religion represents a characteristic trait of modernity, then does it not also work back onto historical religion? (Séguy 1988, 180). Danièle Hervieu-Léger argues that the metaphorization of religion reduces the importance of the religious content; rather, the process of subscription is more important for the continuity of religious tradition: "it is not the continuity in itself, but the visible expression of an affiliation that the faithful exhort – individually or collectively – and membership in a spiritual community that unites adherents – past, present and future" (Hervieu-Léger 1993, 119).

Concepts as 'civil religion', 'cultural religion', or 'metaphorical religion' are useful because they invite us to tie changes in religion to changes in social environment (Hervieu-Léger 1993, 92), and it invites us to see how one memory can be incorporated into another. Simultaneously, the

reciprocity between these different elements of religion compels us to ask what the sacred status of the Holocaust might entail for the notion of the sacred itself. How does this process give rise to new forms of sacrality?

Conclusions

In this thesis, I have argued that religion, religious motifs, and notions of the sacred occupy a marked place in the commemorative practices of Yad Vashem, and that this is spatialized on the memorial's grounds. In this concluding chapter, I revisit the research questions and draw my conclusions. Over the course of the thesis, we have encountered how Yad Vashem cloaks itself in a biblical and sacred garb on the one hand, but disclaims religion to occupy a distinctive place in the memorial *as* religion on the other. We then have examined the ways in which Holocaust memory is spatialized in and around Yad Vashem, accompanied by walks to trace the presence of the religious in Yad Vashem's spatial storytelling through the movement of the human body. Finally, I pulled the discussion inwards, and reflected on the implications of my findings for an understanding of the interconnectedness of Holocaust memory and the religious.

So how does Yad Vashem incorporate religion into its practices of Holocaust commemoration? And how do the answers to this question in turn shed light on the concept of 'religion' itself? I have argued that we can understand the nature and location of religion at Yad Vashem in terms of a reciprocal (dis)placement of religious, historical, and national narrative, in which prophecy, catastrophe, and redemption encounter each other on the memorial complex and interact. This interaction is constituted by the bodies of Yad Vashem's visitors strolling over the complex, storying the different narratives of Yad Vashem in their movement over the memorial complex. The interplay between these narratives, together with established ritualized aspects to a visit to the memorial, give rise to a new form of sacrality on the Yad Vashem grounds, a sacrality that functions within a social reality of Holocaust commemoration. A museum visit to Yad Vashem acquires transcendental overtones, and is embedded into practices and aesthetic paradigms that organize the bodily experience of a visit to Yad Vashem.

By virtue of the reciprocal (dis)placement of religious, historical, and national narrative, the boundaries between Holocaust memory and the religious are destabilized. Stories merges into each other and interweave. Bestowing an aura of sacrality on the memory of the Holocaust points us to the nomadic quality of 'the religious', 'the biblical', and 'the sacred', as transferable types that both effect the context which they encounter, as well as undergo change themselves upon encountering new contexts. How can we, after having destabilized these categories, reconstruct the concept of 'religion'? And what does 'storytelling' have to offer us?

We started off with the observation that Yad Vashem, the Homer of the Holocaust, its poet and storyteller, is a place pregnant with stories. Apart from the dozens of stories of tour guides, curators, and exhibitions, there is a spatial dimension that lies at the foundation of the Yad Vashem's storytelling practices. Holocaust memory is spatialized in and around Yad Vashem. Curators and architects collaborated, imposing curatorial and museological concepts onto the architectural design of the new Yad Vashem. The new Yad Vashem, inaugurated in 2005, provides its visitors with a personal, individual, and emotional entrance into the history of the Holocaust. The primary objectives related to the reopening in 2005 were affective in nature, to cause empathy and identification with 'the Jewish perspective' through heavy emotional impact, multimedia use, and personal stories of Holocaust survivors. The intimate relation between Yad Vashem's content, form, and museological objectives led me to argue that Holocaust memory is spatialized inside Yad Vashem.

The analysis of Yad Vashem's spatial genealogies reinforce this claim. Yad Vashem's landscape and exhibitions reflect changes in the understanding of trauma in the Israeli national collectivity. Evolving from an emphasis on Jewish heroism and resistance towards an emphasis on Jewish victimhood, this change in Holocaust memory has had visual and spatial repercussions in Yad Vashem's landscape. The chief architect from Yad Vashem's redevelopment plans, Moshe Safdie, has been the architectural catalyzer of this change. Having made name for himself for his architectural influence in the post-1967 Old City of Jerusalem, Safdie came to Yad Vashem in the 1970s. His architecture fits in a postmodern tradition which emphasizes abstraction and loss. He was the first at Yad Vashem to introduce Jewish victimhood in the visual representation of Holocaust memory. His architectural fingerprints on Yad Vashem over the past decades have become the leading principle of Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.

As for the insides of the Holocaust History Museum, Israeli negotiations about 'the Jewish perspective' and about representing the heterogeneous Jewish community work in tandem with spatial considerations. Different segments of the Jewish community are spatially arranged in the museum, reflecting changes in Israeli society – battling over space. More so, the imposition of curatorial and museological concepts onto Yad Vashem's architectural design makes a strong example of the intimate relation between content and form, the materialization of processes of imaging the Israeli collectivity, and of negotiation and evolvement of trauma in the Israeli society. Thus, we have to understand the nature and location of religion at Yad Vashem against the backdrop of its Israeli surroundings. Place and group receive the imprint of each other. Our analysis thus points to the nativized tradition of Holocaust memory at Yad Vashem. At the same time, Yad Vashem also engages with global memory paradigms. Both in its commemorative and museological aims, as well as in its architecture, Yad Vashem shows a strong continuity with Holocaust memorials around the world.

We conceptualized the spatialization of Holocaust memory at Yad Vashem as *spatial storytelling*. 'Storytelling' provides us with the methodological means of understanding interplay at Yad Vashem from multiple angles: between visitors and exhibitions, between visitors and museum space, and between me and my interlocutors in the context of my ethnography. We approached 'stories' and 'storytelling' as both a phenomenon as well as a method of inquiry. Studied as a phenomenon, we examined in rich detail the way in which Yad Vashem describes itself, and how it, flirtatiously or explicitly, cloaks itself in biblical and sacred language. Religious language and religious symbolism are central to the self-understanding of Yad Vashem.

At the same time, studied as a method of inquiry, storytelling invites us to unpack the *processes* of meaning-making that are inherent in the experiential field. Indeed, through the notion of 'radical empiricism', we make ourselves experimental subjects and treat our experiences as primary data. Storytelling thus alerts us to the interplay between different actors that stands at the core of interaction. To focus on interplay is to move away from binary splits between researcher and researched, between objects and subjects, between self and other. Thus, 'storytelling' supports an epistemological openness and a reflexive engagement with Yad Vashem. Wandering over Yad Vashem's landscape, I might project stories onto its walls, but at the same time, Yad Vashem presses itself back against me. The walk over Yad Vashem's memorial complex functions as the process in which the narratives of the museum are storied, constructed into meaningful coherence by virtue of the movement of the bodies of Yad Vashem's visitors, who, as they move along, partake in and are indeed constitutive of this process of storytelling.

These methodological considerations formed the blueprints for engaging with spatialized memory at Yad Vashem. I have argued that notions of the sacred and the religious are well in place in Yad Vashem. This refers both to the written and spoken discourse of Yad Vashem, as well as to the landscape of Yad Vashem. These two interact on multiple levels. Lefebvre's theory alerts us to the interactions between mentalist and materialist space, to argue for a theoretical unification of the two through the notion of lived and social space, where space is thought, sensed, and practiced. Approaching space as a 'realized abstraction', we have noted the necessary interconnectedness of conceptual realms and material activities.

The analysis of (dis)placement is both empirical and reflexive in nature. The notions I used for analyzing the experiential field, notions of 'sacred', 'religion' and 'secular' are as much part of our conceptual toolbox as they are objects of investigation themselves. My ethnographic engagement and findings necessitate this dual analysis. Yad Vashem's officials have offered a clear-cut answer to my inquiry about the role and presence of religion at the memorial: religion, as religion, cannot be found at Yad Vashem. Rather, Yad Vashem's officials ascribe a natural and cultural value to transcendental motifs, architecture, and even to biblical references. This tension between the negation of the presence of religion *as* religion on the one hand, and the omnipresence of Bible verses, explicit transcendental language and architectural design on the other, let us to explore our toolbox for a possible explanation.

Heritage religion, civil religion, and even metaphorical religion are useful concepts that alert us to the entanglement or interwovenness between religion and culture, nationalism, and even metaphor. All of these concepts point to an interaction, an interface, between the religious or the biblical and other modes of thought with which they collide. These concepts point us to how different social environments effect religion and vice versa, and they invite us to see how one memory can be incorporated into another. The (spatial) interaction between different narratives of memory has implications for all actors or narratives involved. The imbuement of religious significance into the memory of the Holocaust adds a strand of sacralization to this memory. At the same time, the Holocaust projects back onto the religious itself, probing questions about the fluidity of the Bible, the religious, and biblical quality.

Subsequently, we need to add a deeper layer to our analysis. To question whether the stories of the Holocaust are themselves not stories of a new Bible invites us to critically examine the biases inherent in our understanding of 'religion'. How can we avoid offering a theological emic read on the one hand, and a reductive scientific reading on the other, and instead, move towards medias res? Looking back, my ethnographic engagement with Yad Vashem, guided by a fascination with the Bible verses present as a matter out-of-place, attests to the fundamental strangeness that I initially assigned to this 'religious' presence in this 'non-religious' context.

In the first chapter, I stated that it could be the task of the researcher to interrogate the processes of meaning-making caught up in the process of storytelling. The reflexive drive to this research points to the necessity for me to direct this question to myself as well. Now that my story is there, what does my process of storytelling reveal about my own scholarly position and biases? I think the answer would be that my drive towards comprehension of religion at Yad Vashem, my drive towards constructing a meaningful narrative out of it, was initially driven by a disempowerment in which I signaled a strangeness to the presence of the religious at Yad Vashem that I could not intellectualize. My desire to story the narrative of Yad Vashem could be said to

have originated from the ideological biases that have dominated religious studies traditionally, presupposing a distinction between the religious and the secular.

Rather than viewing the sacred at Yad Vashem as nomadic, I initially departed from an opposition between Holocaust memory and religion. The biblical nomads inhabit Yad Vashem and in turn transform Yad Vashem, whilst Yad Vashem also comes to inhabit the religious, the biblical, and the sacred. This reciprocal infusion effects both Holocaust memory and the religious. Indeed, in our empirical analysis we have seen that they slip over into each other. Consequently, we can let our scholarly categories slip over into each other as well. After having concluded that the Holocaust is eternalized in the timeless garb of the sacred, we come to investigate this new form of sacrality in the specific context of my fieldwork.

How should we understand this sacrality? And what are the implications of this sacrality for the notion of the sacred? We have encountered the idea that anything can be sacralized through ritual and interpretation. Ritualization, the process of making something ordinary into something extraordinary by way of repetition, is what potentially makes an object, a movement, or a place, sacred. With regards to my fieldwork, notions of 'sacrality', 'ritualization', and 'sacralization' are objects of investigation too. Making a move inwards, what can we say about the processes of ritualization that I was caught up in by virtue of my anthropological fascination with Yad Vashem? My position was unique, being able to go to Yad Vashem over ten times, making the same walks, doing interviews on the same places, and continuously reflecting on my surroundings. In this sense, there was a ritualized aspect to my ethnographic engagement with Yad Vashem, inescapably perhaps. In repeating my visits, I was making the ordinary extraordinary. This ritualized aspect to my fieldwork has both advantages and disadvantages in understanding the sacred at Yad Vashem, and ultimately points to the disbalances and shortcomings of my research.

On the one hand, my ritualized museum visits allowed me to become deeply acquainted with the rhythms of Yad Vashem, to become intricately aware of its repetitive forces, and to get a grip on the spatial storytelling of the memorial. On the other hand, my ritualized performance of museum visits was out of balance with regards to my aim of acquiring insight into visitor perception. This is where there is a fundamental disbalance in my research. I set out to find out how visitors perceive the spatialization of Holocaust memory, with particular focus on the religious elements. I have found out that this was too much to ask, based on a singular visit to Yad Vashem. Most visitors do not go to Yad Vashem over ten times. Most of them go once, and do not feel the need to make a quick return visit. Therefore, my interlocutors have not noticed straightaway the different transcendental themes and motifs in between which they find themselves. To become familiar with the ritualized practices and religious symbolism at Yad Vashem, one visit does not suffice. This disbalance has become apparent in that my interlocutors did not assign special status to religion at Yad Vashem. Instead, they were focused on the political aspects of the museum's narrative, even assigning a self-explanatory status to religion at Yad Vashem. Instead of their reaction to the spatial order at Yad Vashem being intellectualized and heavily reflected upon, as was the case for me, their reaction to the museum's narrative and spatial order were primary and sensorial in nature. Reflecting my own findings against my interlocutors' observations, this urges the question for me till what extent I have been part and parcel of the process of sacralization of Yad Vashem.

This disbalance, which can be understood as a shortcoming in the research, further underscores, however, the force that the spatial order of Yad Vashem exerts over its first-time

visitors, and how the space disciplines its visitors into its narrative. Whereas I was able to story my experience by virtue of repetition, to reassert myself and make sense of the world around me, my interlocutors were left paralyzed by the exhibitions. I have conceptualized this in terms of a bystander narrative that Yad Vashem constructs inside the Holocaust History Museum.

Subsequently, I have noticed how through heavy emotional impact Yad Vashem paralyzes its visitors, impeding their critical faculty, and making them only able to bear witness, observe, be bystanders. I argue that there is a correlation between the heavy emotional impact that the Holocaust History Museum brings about and the feeling of shared responsibility that Yad Vashem induces upon its visitors.

Within the larger context of sacred Holocaust memory, this discussion on Yad Vashem's bystander narrative then also pertains to the sacred status of Holocaust memory in the museum context. For, when notions of the sacred and the religious spill into and merge with Holocaust memory, what happens to the quality and status of the sacred itself? One can ask whether it is possible to have too much memory, battling over space, which may paradoxically lead to forgetting. The danger in Yad Vashem's storytelling techniques inside the Holocaust History Museum might be what Dorit Harel described earlier as a 'theme-park experience', giving the visitor the illusion of a facile grasp of complicated events and histories, possibly leading to an elision of the past in favor of easily accessible symbols. The strand of sacralization running through Yad Vashem, taking into account Yad Vashem's emotion-driven and storytelling techniques, might paradoxically threaten to undo the sacrality itself. This question is where future research on Yad Vashem or other Holocaust memorials around the world could focus on: to see how bystander narratives invoked by the museums actually threaten the sacred status of Holocaust memory, as well as the commemorative objectives of education and shaping the future by way of knowledge of the past.

From another angle, future anthropological research could focus on Israeli or Jewish perception of Yad Vashem in particular, and of Holocaust museums in general. This research population could add significant empirical weight to the arguments we have encountered about the unifying function of religious motifs and symbolism at Holocaust remembrance sites. Indeed, we encountered the idea that Yad Vashem, since its reopening in 2005, is all 'first person singular' in the construction of the museum's narrative. Hence, sustained Israeli or Jewish conversation about Yad Vashem's commemorative practices and the presence of religion therein would yield merit in a continuously negotiated and contested Israeli typography.

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Appendix
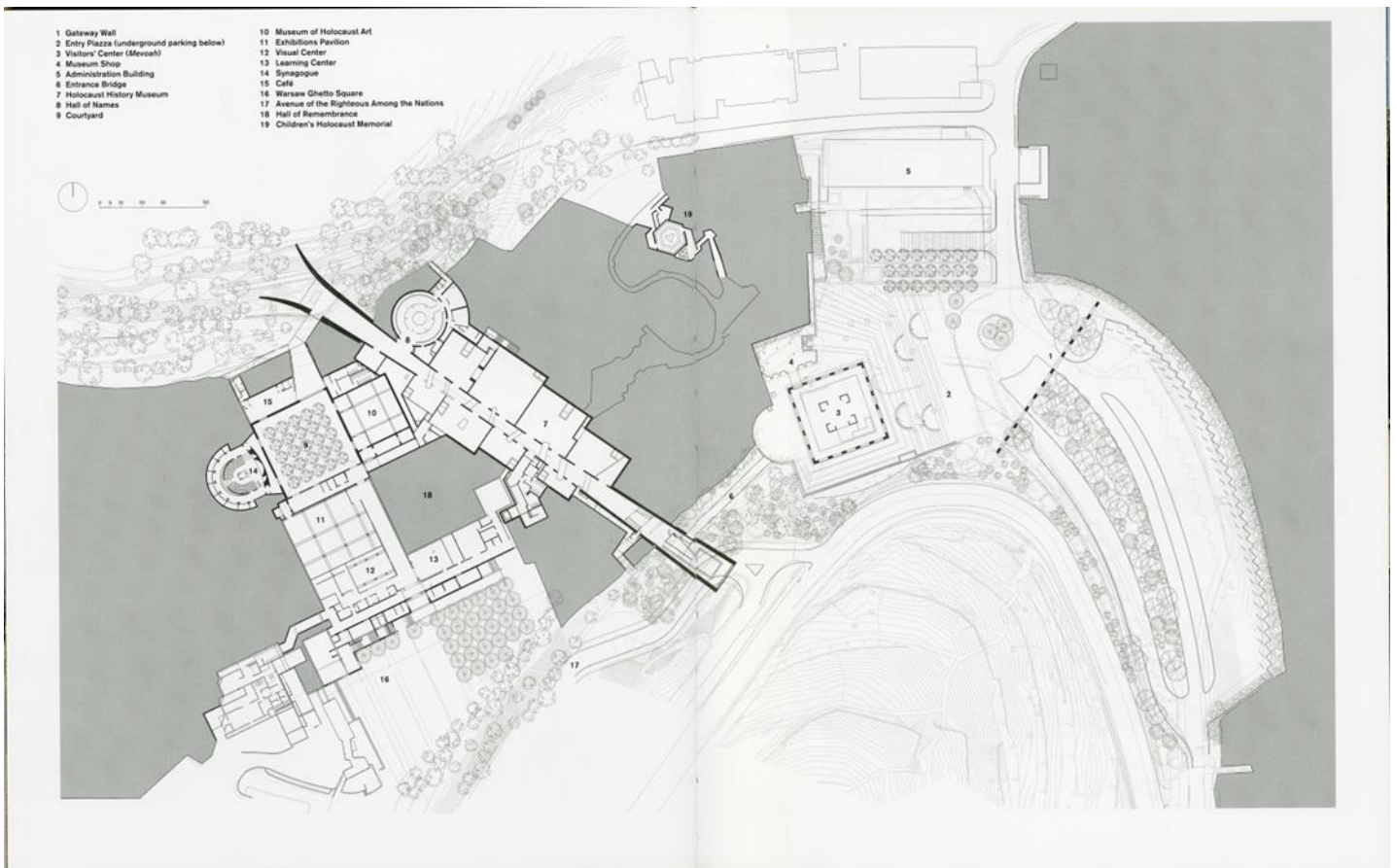
Museum campus plan, courtesy of Safdie Architects ©: 1 gateway wall; 2 entry piazza (underground parking below); 3 visitor centre (mevoah); 4 museum shop; 5 administration building; 6 entrance bridge; 7 Holocaust History Museum; 8 Hall of Names; 9 courtyard; 10. museum of Holocaust art; 11 exhibitions pavilion; 12 visual centre; 13 learning centre; 14 synagogue; 15 café; 16 Warsaw ghetto square; 17 avenue of the righteous among the nations; 18 Hall of Remembrance; 19 children's Holocaust memorial