



Holocaust Commemoration in Israel During the 1950s: The Holocaust Cellar on Mount Zion

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At the end of World War II, once the magnitude of the Holocaust became clear, Jews—organizations and individuals—began thinking about the most suitable ways to commemorate it.¹ One of the first commemoration sites for the Holocaust's victims was the Holocaust Cellar (Martef ha-Shoah). It is situated on Mount Zion, near King David's Tomb² overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem, which, at the time of the site's construction, was under Jordanian rule. The establishment and development of the Holocaust Cellar, mainly by the Ministry of Religious Affairs' director general Shmuel Zanwil Kahana, was part of a broader process of sanctifying Mount Zion and King David's Tomb and turning them into the central holy place in the State of Israel.³

The activity in the Holocaust Cellar during the 1950s centered on traditional Jewish commemoration and was fundamentally different from the commemorative activities in other sites in the State of Israel; moreover, it was totally distinct from Yad Vashem, which was developed at around the same period but emphasized national-secular

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elements and functioned as the main Israeli site dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust. The contrast between these two sites—Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Cellar—reveals an inner struggle within Israeli society during the 1950s regarding the memory of the Holocaust. Throughout this period, the subject of marking the Holocaust was one of the central issues between the Israeli National Religious Party–leaning public and the religious Zionists and their political representatives (who were interested in religious interpretations of the events of the Holocaust) and other Israeli political groups (who emphasized national-historical elements linking the Holocaust to the establishment of the state).

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“Traditional” Holocaust Commemoration

The creation and development of the Holocaust Cellar took place immediately following the end of the 1948 War of Independence and the establishment of the State of Israel, and as discussions about the transfer of religious artifacts and “martyrs’ ashes” from Europe to the State of Israel intensified in 1949. The debate centered around the question of whether the State of Israel had a special commitment to bring the ashes of the dead to Israel for burial.⁴ During this period, Torah scrolls from destroyed communities in Europe were brought to Israel by organizations as well as by individuals.⁵

There was as yet no central place for Holocaust commemoration, and the 10th of Tevet 1949—which was the date set earlier by the Chief Rabbinate as the traditional national commemoration day for the Holocaust victims—was observed in a nonuniform way in various places.⁶ On that day, the Department of Religious Folklore in the Ministry of Religious Affairs organized many different events of a religious-traditional character: In Tel Aviv, the main commemoration ceremony was held in the Central Synagogue, while other gatherings took place in other cities where Holocaust survivors resided.⁷

A turning point in the development of Mount Zion as a Holocaust commemoration site took place when the “martyrs’ ashes” arrived in Israel in June 1949: a small glass coffin containing 31 jars of victims’ ashes was brought from Austria. The jars were painted blue and white with the Star of David and were inscribed with the names of the different concentration and extermination camps where the victims perished. The burial ceremony in Jerusalem was intended as a joint venture of various institutes, such as the Jewish Agency, the Jerusalem Municipality, the World Zionist Organization, and the Ministry of Re-

ligious Affairs. Nevertheless, the ministry took full credit for the service, and the religious representatives—the Chief Rabbinate, the ministry, and other national-religious groups—turned the burial ceremony into a moving and powerful event emphasizing their interpretation of the events of the Holocaust. In Tel Aviv, masses of people paid their respects by visiting the coffin as it lay in state. Later, wrapped in the Israeli flag, the glass coffin was transported to Jerusalem and was buried in Sanhedriya Cemetery, then the temporary cemetery of Jerusalem.⁸ Following the ceremony, several suggestions were made about where a memorial for the Holocaust should be built and where the ashes of the victims should be entombed. Thus, parallel to the process of Mount Zion and King David’s Tomb being converted into the holiest site in the State of Israel, establishing a monument at the same site for commemoration of the Holocaust was discussed for the first time.⁹

The Holocaust Cellar was “officially” established only later in 1949, as part of the festival of Sukkot. The ministry organized a symbolic procession of bringing religious artifacts to Jerusalem “as a counterpoint to the removal of the articles from the Holy Temple in Jerusalem to Rome.”¹⁰ These included Torah scrolls and hundreds of other traditional ritual objects, such as Hanukkah candelabra, Torah crowns, and incense boxes that were rescued from Europe and brought to Israel at the initiative of the ministry. Military vehicles carried these items to Jerusalem where, near the entrance to the city, the convoy was greeted ceremoniously by representatives of the Jerusalem municipality. A large number of people accompanied the procession to Jeshurun Synagogue, where a festive prayer service took place.¹¹ The ministry’s desire to present these religious articles to the public motivated it to renovate “one of Mount Zion’s caves for the purpose of making the place ‘the perpetual light’ for the victims from Europe.” In this cave, the ministry intended to place, besides the ritual objects that were still arriving from Europe, the “ashes of the victims.”¹² This decision formed part of a wider policy promoted by Kahana to develop Mount Zion and turn it into the central Jewish pilgrimage site in the State of Israel.¹³

The 10th of Av that year seemed like the optimal occasion for an inauguration. The ministry appealed to the public via newspaper announcements with a request to take advantage of the ceremony on Mount Zion to bury all remains and ashes that were still in the possession of individuals and organizations.¹⁴ A committee headed and appointed by Kahana, under a series of different names—such as “The Committee for the Memory of the Holocaust” and “The Mount Zion Committee”¹⁵—organized the ceremony exclusively, without the involvement of any other official representatives of the State of Israel.

During the earlier part of the event, pieces of “Jewish Soap” and a few jars wrapped in black containing “martyrs’ ashes” were buried by the Chief Rabbinate’s representatives in the Sanhedriya Cemetery. Later that day, the ceremony proceeded to Mount Zion, where Kahana read “the Holocaust Scroll, which was composed especially for this commemoration day.”¹⁶ This ceremony should be seen as the founding event that led to the development of the memorial site and its conversion into one of the major Israeli spots dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust.

In 1950, the ministry continued to develop Mount Zion as a commemoration site for the Holocaust. A symbol for the place was determined,¹⁷ and the name “Holocaust Cellar” was first proposed. The ministry tried to emphasize the site’s importance as “the only place in the Jewish world that, as part of a set order, consecrates the memory of the Holocaust.”¹⁸ During the early 1950s the “Scrolls Room,” where some Torah scrolls brought from Europe were displayed, was established. Banners on the walls of the room emphasized the contrast between the destruction of the European Jewry and the establishment of the State of Israel. In the “Kibbutz ha-Galuyot Room,” adjacent to the Holocaust Cellar, a *shofar* (ram’s horn) brought from the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp was put on display, together with many religious objects that had been brought from Europe. One of the more prominent exhibits in this room was a jacket made by the Nazis from sheets of Torah scrolls.¹⁹ The “Haggadah Room” displayed several Haggadah books that had been brought from Europe together with an *etrog* (citron) that the inmates “used in the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp.”²⁰ During the festival of Purim in 1951, the ministry inaugurated a room containing 70 scrolls of the Book of Esther, which had also been brought from different destroyed communities in Europe.²¹

During the 1950s, the ceremonies at the site became more extensive and drew larger crowds. The memorial ceremony in 1951 was attended by almost 20,000 people, during which the Ingathering of the Exiles flag was hoisted. The fan was embroidered with a deer facing backward, toward the ruined communities of Europe, and included the prayer “and we shall be gathered together from the four corners of the world to our land.”²² In 1953, scorched pieces of Torah scrolls rescued from the historic Rashi Synagogue in Worms were ensconced in the Holocaust Cellar.²³ In the courtyard, a monument in the shape of a furnace and a sculpture named the “Pillar of Tears,” dedicated to the children slaughtered in the Holocaust, were likewise built.²⁴

Commemoration day on the 10th of Tevet 1950 gave the ministry the opportunity to further entrench the Holocaust Cellar’s position as

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a central commemoration site for the Holocaust. The centrality of the site was emphasized by burying the “martyrs’ ashes” there, a symbolic act that accorded the Holocaust Cellar great validity and authority. From that point onward, Mount Zion served as the exclusive site for the burial of the “martyrs’ ashes.” Prior to the ceremony, the newspapers had announced that the ministry intended to bury the ashes and pieces of “Jewish soap” on Mount Zion. As the time of the ceremony approached, delegations of Holocaust survivors brought small containers of ashes and other sacred relics to the offices of the ministry. During the ceremony itself, the two chief rabbis, with ashes on their clothes as per the traditional sign of mourning, entered the Holocaust Cellar, where they deposited the “sacred remains.” Simultaneously, an eternal light was ignited inside the cellar, burning subsequently throughout the 1950s.²⁵ After the service, the Holocaust Cellar was seen, at least as far as the ministry and the Chief Rabbinate were concerned, as the only legitimate place in the State of Israel for the burial of the “martyrs’ ashes.”

Although during the 1950s several attempts were made—both in Israel and elsewhere—to establish commemoration sites whose “holiness” and legitimacy were based on burying the ashes, the ministry insisted that the “martyrs’ ashes” be buried solely on Mount Zion. Thus, the ministry established its exclusivity in commemorating the remains of the Holocaust victims, and it created on Mount Zion a unique combination: a burial site integrated within a commemoration site. Because the Mount Zion Committee organized a series of symbolic ceremonies and exhibits in the Holocaust Cellar, the place also turned into a kind of museum. The glass exhibition cabinets containing the jars of ashes and religious artifacts brought from Europe, the different presentations, exhibitions, and maps,²⁶ together with musical notes for “lyrics that were sung during the Holocaust” turned visits into a deeply emotional experience for many of the pilgrims.²⁷

The creation of the Holocaust Cellar and its development had much to do with its proximity to King David’s Tomb; it drew its legitimacy largely from the tomb’s sacredness. “The cellar projects onto Mount Zion, and Mount Zion in return projects onto the Holocaust Cellar,”²⁸ wrote Kahana by way of explaining the link between the two sites.

The development of Mount Zion and David’s Tomb as the holiest site in the State of Israel occurred immediately after the end of the 1948 war, when pilgrims frequented the previously inaccessible tomb.²⁹ At the initiative of the ministry, efforts began to repair and change the structure of the tomb, which had been damaged by bullets during the war.³⁰ During the early 1950s, traditions of pilgrimage

began to form. These traditions, most of which had not existed before 1948, were of a popular religious nature and were promoted by the ministry. Although part of the Israeli public, including some religious sectors, had doubts about the authenticity of the tradition that David's burial site was indeed on Mount Zion, broad sectors of the religious community were attracted to the site and upheld its holiness. Jews from Jerusalem and other areas in Israel as well as from abroad conducted many religious rituals at the site, which enhanced its sacred aura. Mount Zion functioned during this period as "the holiest place in the State and served as the organizational and spiritual center for all the country's holy and folkloristic sites."³¹

Mount Zion was conceived by the ministry as a symbolic continuum of Mount Moriah, the site where Isaac was bound, east of Mount Zion behind the cease-fire lines. In this fashion, the ministry's officials emphasized the link between destruction and redemption in the history of the Jewish people and endorsed the strong kinship between King David's Tomb and the Holocaust Cellar.³² The connection between the two sites was further boosted by the Mount Zion Committee through many emblematic ceremonies and exhibitions that took place on almost every mourning day both in the Holocaust Cellar and at David's Tomb. For example, in a symbolic act in 1949, a number of Torah crowns that had been brought from the destroyed communities in Europe were placed on top of the vast sarcophagus that marked the site of King David's tomb.³³

Throughout the 1950s, bitter criticism was voiced against the ministry and Kahana's activities on Mount Zion. The censure, from a wide range of the Israeli public—from left-wing intellectuals to the ultra-Orthodox³⁴—was directed primarily at the rapid development of David's Tomb, the traditions ascribed to the site, and especially the existence of a commemoration site for the Holocaust on Mount Zion. An especially caustic critic, Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz, protesting against Kahana's activities there, called Mount Zion "Dajani's junkyard."³⁵ Other public figures came out against the transformation of the Holocaust Cellar from a burial and commemoration site into a "museum" and against its location on Mount Zion, next to the sacred David's Tomb.³⁶ Kahana, however, dismissed all such criticism and wrote: "It is a miracle that this tomb [the Holocaust Cellar] is in Israeli hands. It is a spiritual asset important for our generation and, moreover, for future generations, a fact that the public does not yet fully appreciate."³⁷ Kahana's words, it seems, reflect the concern felt by parts of Jewish society regarding the commemoration of the Holocaust in the State of Israel. The creation of the Holocaust Cellar on Mount Zion and

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[22] Jewish Social Studies the burial of the remains at the site should be seen not only as part of Kahana's program to contribute to shaping the Holocaust commemoration in the State of Israel but also as part of the effort by religious-Zionist sectors in Israeli society to manifest their own interpretation of the Holocaust's events and thereby influence the way in which the Holocaust should be remembered—namely, with closer affiliation to Jewish tradition and customs of prayer, mourning, and fasting.³⁸

Space and Time: Shaping the Commemoration Calendar

In April 1951, the Israeli Knesset ruled that Holocaust Remembrance Day would take place every year on the 27th of Nissan, the day when the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was subdued. Yet in the absence of any solid tradition for this day, and due to the inability to create uniform memorial customs, this date was not widely accepted by the Israeli public until much later.³⁹ As a result, during the early 1950s, many of the Holocaust survivors continued to hold separate commemoration ceremonies in different places and on different dates, including on the 10th of Tevet, the general *kaddish* (prayer for the deceased) day, whereas “the general national-Israeli mourning was delivered into small separate commemorative days of Landsmannschaften.”⁴⁰

The Chief Rabbinate's decision to commemorate the Holocaust on the 10th of Tevet was made immediately after World War II. It was based on the perception common among religious sectors in the Israeli public that the Holocaust was one link in the chain of disasters in Jewish history and, as such, should be commemorated in accordance with the traditional mourning customs that had been established by earlier generations.

Throughout the 1950s, the duality in Holocaust commemoration dates gave rise to serious conflicts between the National Religious Party and other sectors of Israeli society. Unlike the Israeli Workers' Party (Mapai), for which the Holocaust and its commemoration were not major items on the agenda,⁴¹ the political representatives of the National Religious Party made every effort to include this subject in their activities.⁴² As part of this endeavor, the ministry made persistent efforts as early as 1949 to grant the 10th of Tevet both character and content as the commemoration day. That year, ceremonies took place where Holocaust survivors lived, such as Tel Aviv, Ramleh, and Acre.⁴³ Thereafter, with the transfer of the ashes to Mount Zion and the establishment of the Holocaust Cellar in 1949–50, the ministry combined a

“sanctified” space dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust with a set of events connected to the same subject.⁴⁴

This calendar of annual events was filled by a series of different Holocaust commemoration ceremonies. The services conducted on Mount Zion during almost every Jewish festival and on fast days were part of the ministry’s plan to establish a linkage between the acts of destruction in Jewish history and the creation of the State of Israel. Whereas the national-secular commemoration ceremonies that took shape during the same period usually included speeches by public figures and an artistic program incorporating textual readings and singing and was intended to emphasize the connection between the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, the traditional commemoration ceremony on Mount Zion was fundamentally different and was shaped according to the traditional Jewish customs of mourning.⁴⁵

The difficulties encountered by the ministry in organizing the traditional commemoration calendar, which stemmed mainly from the lack of information about the Holocaust itself, led its officials to call on Holocaust survivors to “provide the [Mount Zion] Committee with special dates from the history of the Holocaust known to them.”⁴⁶ Thus, gradually, a calendar of annual events began to take shape. For example, *parashat zekhor* (the Torah section on remembrance read on a specific Sabbath) was set as the “Saturday dedicated to the memory of the horrors of Hitler, in addition to the monstrosities of Amalek and Haman,”⁴⁷ establishing a direct link between traumatic events in the Jewish past and the Holocaust. On the eve of Passover in 1950, the first commemorative service for the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising took place in the Holocaust Cellar. During the ceremony, various National Religious Party figures gave speeches, and a drum made from sheets of Torah scrolls that had been brought from Europe and deposited in the Holocaust Cellar were presented.⁴⁸ That same year, a memorial day for Hungary’s exterminated Jewry was fixed for the 20th of Sivan, emphasizing the ancient roots of that day, which was connected to the slaughter during the Tah ve-tat pogroms (1648–49).⁴⁹ The memory of the burning of the Torah scrolls by the Nazis was connected to the tradition that regarded the 6th of Tamuz as the day when wagons full of copies of the Talmud were burned in 1244 during the life of Rabbi Yehiel of Paris. “The marking of this day,” said Kahana, “is in line with the general plan to preserve for future generations the days of fasting and mourning connected to the Diaspora, which are gradually erased from our memory.”⁵⁰

During the week of *parashat va-yikra*, in Adar 1951, the tradition of

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commemorating the children killed during the Holocaust began. During that week, groups of children frequented Mount Zion and participated in a ceremony that included inscribing letters in a Torah scroll that was dedicated for this purpose. During later years of that decade, one of the rooms adjacent the Holocaust Cellar was dedicated to the memory of the children slaughtered during the Holocaust.⁵¹ The Warsaw Ghetto uprising was marked by hoisting a blue and white flag “in memory of the flag waved in Warsaw Ghetto on the day the uprising broke out.”⁵² This flag was made of shreds of other flags that had been used by Jews before and during the Holocaust. It was flown on Mount Zion for three weeks, “signifying the period of the revolt,” and was removed after the 27th of Nissan, the national Holocaust Memorial Day.⁵³ That day, a commemoration ceremony took place in the synagogue near the Holocaust Cellar, which included lighting candles, studying mishnayot, and a tour in both the cellar and David’s Tomb. The three weeks dedicated to the commemoration of the Holocaust on Mount Zion, together with the rest of the events in the Holocaust Cellar, created a yearly time frame of traditional commemoration that was almost totally distinct from the general Holocaust commemoration in the State of Israel. Contrary to the emphasis in Yad Vashem and other memorial sites in Israel, the ceremonies at the Holocaust Cellar centered around the destruction of Jewish communities in Europe, the annihilation of the European centers of study and wisdom, the desecration of Torah scrolls, and the demolition of synagogues.

Kahana made every effort to extend the memory of the Holocaust; he tried to find additional significant dates in the history of the Holocaust and connect them to the Holocaust Cellar. He suggested, for example, that the 17th of Elul, the day on which World War II began, be marked as a significant Holocaust day, explaining that “even now, out of personal devotion, hundreds of people hold pilgrimages to the Holocaust Cellar to pray near ‘the graves of our forefathers’ [*kivrei avot*], near the buried ashes. During the month of Elul, the Holocaust Cellar turns into a place of study, communion, and prayer.”⁵⁴ The Holocaust Cellar was also used for commemorating significant dates in the history of specific communities: for example, the 24th of Iyar, the day when the extermination of the Hungarian Jewry began; or the 9th of Av, the day on which Jews traditionally mark the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which was seen also as the day the order was given by the Nazis to annihilate the Warsaw Ghetto.⁵⁵

During the 1950s, Mount Zion and the Holocaust Cellar became an eclectic place included in almost every Jewish and Israeli tradition or ritual. Even feasts and events that had no direct connection to the

Holocaust were given a different emphasis and were associated with its memory. There are ample examples for this, but I will mention only a few here. During the Hanukkah ceremony of 1949, the day of Kibbutz ha-Galuyot was marked by lighting one of the candelabra that were brought from Europe in the same year.⁵⁶ On the same occasion, an exhibition of Hanukkah candelabra and Torah scrolls that were gathered from the destroyed communities was opened next to King David's Tomb. During Hanukkah of 1950, groups of Holocaust survivors lit candles in "a hundred Hanukkah candelabra that were rescued from the Holocaust." The survivors used a torch that had been brought via Modiin, the birthplace of the Hashmonean family.⁵⁷ On the 15th of Shvat (Arbor Day, the feast of Tu bi-Shvat), a grove was planted around the Holocaust Cellar, and during the feast of Sukkot an etrog brought from the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp was placed inside a small glassed box in the middle of the sukkah that was erected next to David's Tomb.⁵⁸ During the 1951 Remembrance Day for the Fallen Soldiers in Israel's Wars, members of the Mount Zion Committee started inscribing two Torah scrolls, one called the "Book of Independence" (*Sefer ha-komemiyut*), dedicated to the memory of the fallen soldiers, and the other called the "Book of Thanksgiving" (*Sefer ha-hodayah*); they were composed of parchments of Torah scrolls that had been brought from Europe. The book was kept on Mount Zion. It was determined that "in the event of another war," this book was to be "handed over to the IDF [Israeli Defense Force]."⁵⁹ The 1950 Independence Day ceremony was launched by the blowing of a horn that had been part of a shipment of religious items from Europe. In subsequent years, the Independence Day ceremony on Mount Zion was accompanied by the lighting of a four-torch candelabrum, which had also been brought from Europe and marked the four settlements in Gush Etsyon that fell into the hands of the Jordanians in 1948.⁶⁰ The 9th of Av was also marked in the Holocaust Cellar each year as a commemoration day for the destroyed European Jewry, with ashes being placed on top of the ark of the synagogue near King David's Tomb.⁶¹

Kahana, who conceived and promoted most of the programs and events in the Holocaust Cellar, was well aware of the danger that the "public would not tolerate them [the programs he promoted]" but still claimed that "the commemoration in the Holocaust Cellar will undoubtedly penetrate wider public circles and bind them to the memory of the Holocaust, as specific dates become accepted. For the time being, we are laying the foundations and making attempts to establish special events. We will see the effects of these actions as time goes by."⁶²

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Pilgrimage to the Holocaust Cellar

[26] During the years immediately following World War II, Holocaust survivors usually expressed their mourning in traditional ways, such as by lighting memorial candles or reciting the kaddish. Yet in the absence of a tomb or a gravestone, many survivors could not follow the Jewish tradition of saying that prayer near their relatives' graves on the precise dates when their kinsmen perished (*yarzeit*).⁶³ It is true that some Holocaust survivors' organizations commemorated the Holocaust in cemeteries with ceremonies that were developed spontaneously, usually near memorials that bore the names of the perished communities.⁶⁴ But, since 1951, and more intensively after the enactment of the Yad Vashem Law in 1953, memorial ceremonies took place on the 27th of Nissan in Kibbutz Yad Mordekhai and in Kibbutz Lohamei ha-Getaot, as well as in synagogues in many towns and settlements. *Yar ha-Kdoshim* (Martyrs' Forest), dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust victims, was founded on Holocaust Memorial Day in 1954, launching an official national yearly ceremony.⁶⁵ Four years later, a ceremony was held for the first time on the "Mount of Remembrance" (*Har ha-Zikaron*) in western Jerusalem, at the site of Yad Vashem. Since then the national Holocaust ceremony has taken place there annually.

Nevertheless, it seems that all the different ceremonies and memorial events only partially answered the Holocaust survivors' ceremonial needs; none could satisfy their basic desire for a physical location where mourning could be expressed in traditional Jewish ways. The Holocaust Cellar, being a "small place" with a traditional Jewish character and atmosphere, offered the survivors a suitable solution. The lighting of the candles in the cellar, the prayers, and the integration of congregational memorial plaques on the cellar's walls all conferred on the place a traditional character that some of the survivors valued. This is why, during the 1950s, such a strong link could be established between the Holocaust survivors and their representatives and the Holocaust Cellar.

Kahana took pains to involve Holocaust survivors' organizations in decisions regarding the activity in the Holocaust Cellar. Many meetings were dedicated to the organization and design of the commemoration ceremonies at the site. This cooperation strengthened Kahana's political situation and assured the cellar's place as a legitimate site for the commemoration of the Holocaust in the State of Israel and the Diaspora.⁶⁶ Kahana offered the Holocaust survivors religious elements they could not find in any other commemorative place in Israel—a "prayer house" where they could channel their devotion and mourning. It was primarily the ashes buried at the site, along with other reli-

gious items on display (such as Torah books and ancient scriptures) and, generally, the “Jewish atmosphere,” that created a strong emotional experience for the believers. Kahana succeeded in persuading some Holocaust survivors to regard the place both as their main focus of commemoration and as a natural place where they could deposit all the “sacred” relics they still held. So immense was their identification and sympathy with the place that some of them suggested “setting up the Holocaust Cellar as the traditional monument [*galed*] for the commemoration of the Holocaust and placing on the mountain [Mount Zion] plaques in memory of all the [lost] communities.”⁶⁷ This made the Holocaust Cellar a “holy site” in its own right, and many began to see it as the “general and common grave of the Holocaust.”⁶⁸

Many events in the Holocaust Cellar took place in cooperation with Holocaust organizations. Some survivors made a pilgrimage to Mount Zion during Hanukkah and lit candles in a candelabrum that had been rescued from Europe.⁶⁹ As part of an annual memorial service for Hungarian Jewry, an exhibit of photos from Hungary’s ruined synagogues opened near the Holocaust Cellar, and a similar exhibit honored Lithuania’s perished Jewry.⁷⁰ In 1953, Hungarian survivors organizations decided to establish on Mount Zion an archive (*beit gnazim*) where the names of perished Jews and documents from the Holocaust would be kept. Even after the establishment of Yad Vashem in 1953, Kahana continued to develop the Holocaust Cellar with the help of the various survivors’ organizations⁷¹ by commemorating obliterated communities in memorial plaques plastered on the cellar walls.⁷² As early as 1952, a plaque with the names of nearly 300 communities exterminated during the Holocaust was placed in the cellar, and later that decade hundreds of plaques bearing the names of the communities and the dates of their extermination were gradually added.⁷³ A traditional service was also established for survivors to remember their destroyed communities and affix the commemorative plaques onto the cellar walls.⁷⁴

The sanctity of Mount Zion, the location of both David’s Tomb and the Holocaust Cellar, was promoted beyond Jerusalem, radiating to other parts of Israel and the Diaspora. Not only did Jews embark on pilgrimages to the site from great distances,⁷⁵ but the cellar’s holiness was also propagated by a variety of means throughout the Jewish world. Similar to the custom of sending stones, flowers, or soil from Mount Zion to other parts of the Jewish world,⁷⁶ parallel rituals developed in the Holocaust Cellar. In 1949, the ministry had begun to distribute Torah scrolls that were rescued from Europe and collected in Mount Zion to various synagogues in Jerusalem and beyond.⁷⁷ This practice

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[28] continued through the 1950s as Torah scrolls were being restored in Mount Zion's "Scribal House" and sent to different communities in the Diaspora.⁷⁸ The ministry initiated the "Wandering Candelabrum Enterprise" by delivering Hanukkah candelabra brought from Europe and used in Mount Zion to different settlements and *maabarot* (temporary new-immigrant settlements).⁷⁹ Memorial candles "sanctified" in the Holocaust Cellar were sent to the United States,⁸⁰ together with memorial stones carved near the Holocaust Cellar that were used for the commemoration of individuals and communities who perished during the Holocaust. The stones, too, were sent to the Diaspora.⁸¹

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Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Cellar

The establishment and development of the Holocaust Cellar in the 1950s was connected to three different notions: commemoration, memorial, and sacredness, each playing an important role in the development of the site. Whereas the evolution of the Holocaust Cellar derived from its proximity to David's Tomb, particularly because of the burial of the "martyrs' ashes" at the site, these elements were lacking in Yad Vashem, which was cultivated during the same period as the main Holocaust commemoration site in the State of Israel.

As mentioned earlier, in 1951 the Israeli Knesset decided to proclaim the 27th of Nissan Holocaust Remembrance Day. Kahana, aware of the problematic duality in the existence of two commemoration days (the now newly established national date and the religious-traditional one on the 10th of Tevet), declared that

[T]he agenda [of the religious memorial day in Tevet] does not replace the 27th of Nissan, which was declared by the Knesset, but should complement it. The 27th of Nissan is Holocaust Remembrance Day from the historical and national perspectives, and its purpose is to infuse knowledge of the Holocaust and other educational aspects in the nation's conscience. The 10th of Tevet, on the other hand, is a traditional day. The different unique purposes of each one of these days required the existence of two separate days. The incorporation of the two memorial days into one would make them both lose their character.⁸²

The multiplicity of Holocaust commemoration days was but one manifestation of the controversy and tension characterizing the relationships between Kahana and the ministry, on the one hand, and representatives of Yad Vashem, on the other. One of the main matters of contention between the two bodies was related to the question of

whether the Holocaust Cellar could coexist with Yad Vashem, and this was manifested in the issue of financing the former.⁸³ Throughout the 1950s, political figures from the National Religious Party tended to criticize Yad Vashem's management as an institution, which focused primarily on research rather than on commemoration. A demand that Yad Vashem should finance the Holocaust Cellar was raised, and many complaints about the poor maintenance conditions on Mount Zion were directed at Yad Vashem; they argued that the budget for the Holocaust Cellar depended exclusively on donations, whereas Yad Vashem had state funding, so it should support the cellar as well.⁸⁴ Appeals made by the ministry to the "Remuneration Committee" to allocate a budget for the Holocaust Cellar remained unanswered,⁸⁵ and Yad Vashem likewise refused to recognize any financial claims made by the Mount Zion Committee throughout the 1950s.⁸⁶

It seems that the main disagreement between the two institutions was connected to the issue of commemoration. The question of whether Yad Vashem should be involved in commemoration in general and in "traditional commemoration" in particular (beyond the functions that were determined in the Yad Vashem Law) remained a sticking point between the ministry and Yad Vashem throughout the decade. Kahana believed that these two types of commemoration should be separated and that it was important to leave the Holocaust Cellar as a site where the religious-traditional aspects of the Holocaust would be highlighted, but others thought that the Holocaust Cellar should be closed and that all modes of commemoration, including the traditional one, should be concentrated in Yad Vashem.⁸⁷ The opening of a synagogue and the "Hall of Remembrance" (Ohel Yizkor) in Yad Vashem should, at least in the opinion of Yad Vashem officials, have solved the problem of the traditional commemoration; they claimed that "there is only one place for commemoration [in the State of Israel] and that is the Mount of Remembrance."⁸⁸ Kahana and the ministry rejected this and continued to fight for the Holocaust Cellar's legitimacy to coexist with Yad Vashem while criticizing that institution's focus on research at the expense of Holocaust commemoration.⁸⁹ Kahana's position on this matter and his insistence on presenting a commemoration agenda distinct from the national one allowed him and other officials from the National Religious Party to emphasize their interpretation of events of the Holocaust.⁹⁰

Tension between Yad Vashem and the ministry climaxed in 1957, when new Jewish ashes were brought to Israel, this time from Poland. Yad Vashem's officials demanded that the "martyrs' ashes" be kept in the Hall of Remembrance, in a place designated for this purpose in

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the site's plan.⁹¹ The Yad Vashem representatives' guideline appears to have been that the burial of the ashes there would establish its position and create a counterweight to the Holocaust Cellar's "holiness" and importance. The ministry, however, put its entire weight behind securing the Holocaust Cellar's exclusiveness as the only place in the State of Israel where "martyrs' ashes" should be buried. Kahana and others claimed that it was not right for the ashes to be buried in a secular commemoration site such as Yad Vashem without any religious significance. A year earlier, the ministry declined a request to transfer ashes from Mount Zion to Paris, to be used as the foundation for a memorial to the Holocaust there.⁹² It argued that transferring the remains of the dead from one place to another and thereby establishing a "second" burial place would go against Jewish tradition. Apparently, similar arguments formed the basis for the ministry's refusal to approve the burial of the "martyrs' ashes" at Yad Vashem's Hall of Remembrance. Rabbi Maimom, during whose office as the minister of religious affairs Mount Zion was declared the place where the "martyrs' ashes" were to be buried, approached both the chief rabbis and Yad Vashem's directorate with a request that pouches of ashes newly brought from Europe be laid to rest in the Holocaust Cellar. His plea was based on the argument that Yad Vashem "is not a cemetery and has no special tradition."⁹³ Chief Rabbis Herzog and Nissim supported his request and ruled that "it is important to concentrate the Jewish ashes in one central place, and there is no doubt that the tomb on Mount Zion will best honor the ashes."⁹⁴

It seems that the site kept its relative popularity during most of the 1960s,⁹⁵ even as Yad Vashem's special place as the central Holocaust commemoration site in the State of Israel stabilized. The cellar's status may have altered during the early 1960s as a result of the changing attitudes in Israel toward the Holocaust and its commemoration,⁹⁶ and this transformation was partly connected to the establishment of Yad Vashem and the building of the Hall of Remembrance there. Still, it seems that the main reason for the cellar's decline in popularity was the geopolitical change that followed the Six Day War of 1967. The outcome of the war and the reclamation of the Jewish holy places in the Old City of Jerusalem resulted in the steady decline in the status of David's Tomb and the Holocaust Cellar. Thus, the customs that developed at David's Tomb during the years when the city had been divided once again became dispersed throughout Jerusalem and its environs. The Western Wall's position as the Jewish people's holiest site, attracting throngs of worshippers and celebrants, was reinstated. David's Tomb therefore became a less attractive destination for pilgrims.

Many religious ceremonies that had been held at Mount Zion and David's Tomb, such as weddings and bar mitzvahs, now relocated to the Western Wall, and the exhibitions and displays at the site discontinued. Mount Zion thus lost its function both as a unique observation point over the Old City and as a memorial site for the other holy places in the Jerusalem region. Although the annual ceremonies in the Holocaust Cellar continued until the 1980s, fewer and fewer believers attended them. No alternative site for a traditional commemoration of the Holocaust was developed after the Six Day War, either at the Western Wall or at any other holy site. It seems, then, that the traditional commemoration mutated and relinquished all physical manifestation and the Holocaust Cellar lost its magnetism.

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Conclusion

Although Kahana represented the general sentiments prevalent in the State of Israel, which saw itself as the legatee of the Holocaust survivors and therefore responsible for the memory of the Holocaust, he was not fully committed to the national version of the Holocaust commemoration. Kahana created on Mount Zion an independent mode of commemoration while cultivating the Holocaust Cellar as the main traditional commemoration site in Israel. He based the legitimacy for his activities on his official position in the ministry, but he also acted behind the scenes, promoting and creating new traditions and myths and assembling at the site symbolic items that embodied its holiness for the pilgrims.⁹⁷ These were anti-establishment activities, carried out in an era when the "cult of nationhood" rather than traditional religion was dominant in Israel.

The Holocaust Cellar, together with David's Tomb, played a significant role in strengthening Kahana's political position and that of his National Religious Party, which was adept at harnessing the religious fervor of the masses visiting the Holocaust Cellar to its own needs. Nonetheless, the many pilgrims who visited Mount Zion also contributed to the growth of the popular commemoration ceremonies at the site. These two groups of people naturally influenced each other: on the one hand, the visitors to the Holocaust Cellar required the activity of Kahana and his people who organized their visits, elevated their experience, and made it easier for them to reach the site; on the other hand, Kahana also needed the pilgrims to consolidate his status and acquire legitimacy for his actions.

The extensive activity surrounding the Holocaust Cellar during the

1950s reflects the central place that the Holocaust held in public life in the State of Israel at that time.⁹⁸ The development of the site was especially prominent against the backdrop of the parallel processes that took place in Yad Vashem and the way its directors perceived the commemoration of the Holocaust. Whereas the Holocaust Cellar drew its claim to authenticity from the east, namely from the Temple Mount, the Old City of Jerusalem, and David's Tomb, Yad Vashem based its authority mainly on the west: the "Zionist" part of Jerusalem and the "sacred" Zionist-national space that evolved during the same period in western Jerusalem and included Herzl's Tomb, the Military Cemetery, and Yad Vashem.⁹⁹ The difference between these two sites manifested itself also in their architecture. The buildings and memorial sites in Yad Vashem were built in a modern and monumental architectural style, which was sometimes vertical in nature, whereas the Holocaust Cellar excelled in the absence of any modern structure and utilized the old, sometimes even ancient, buildings on Mount Zion.

Despite the fact that both Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Cellar were not founded as part of a set viewpoint about the commemoration of the Holocaust, the differences between the two sites are staggering. Yad Vashem, it seems, sought to create among its visitors alienation and the sense of a "huge place." The Holocaust Cellar, in contrast, had a local character, which made it popular among the more traditional Holocaust survivors and was the reason why the site became so successful, in its own way, in the 1950s.

Notes

I am most grateful to Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, who read through the drafts of this article and made innumerable and helpful comments. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the Hebrew sources are mine.

1 Judith Tydor Baumel, "'In Everlasting Memory': Individual and Communal Holocaust Commemoration in Israel," *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1995): 146–70; Mooli Brog, "Levatim behantsahat ha-Shoah be-Erets Yisrael 1942–1949," in *Zikaron samui, zikaron galui: Toda'at ha-Shoah bi-medinat Yisrael*, ed. Yoel Rappel (Tel Aviv, 1998), 45–53.

One of the first places commemorating the Holocaust was Rachel's Tomb, south of Jerusalem, where, in 1946, a ceremony in memory of the victims took place. See *Hatsofeh*, Apr. 24, 1946.

2 See Doron Bar, "Re-Creating Jewish Sanctity in Jerusalem: The Case of Mount Zion and David's Tomb Between 1948–

1967,” *The Journal of Israeli History* 23, no. 2 (2004): 233–51.

- 3 Kahana was born in Poland and immigrated to Israel in 1940. He served as the director general of the Ministry of Religious Affairs between 1948 and 1971 on behalf of the National Religious Party and was responsible for the development of various holy sites in the State of Israel, such as David’s Tomb on Mount Zion, Elijah’s Cave in Haifa, Eshel Avraham in Beer Sheva, and the tombs of the tsadikim in the Galilee. Kahana, who had left Europe prior to the beginning of the extermination, was also deeply involved in the Holocaust commemoration in the State of Israel. For a partial biography, see S. Z. Kahana, “Shomrim ve-kabtsanim shel hamekomot ha-kdoshim,” *Yeda-am* 55–56 (1988): 13–14.
- 4 See the *Hatsofeh* report (June 7, 1949) on the Knesset member Hilel Kook’s proposition to bring to Israel, together with the remains of Herzl, the sacred ashes of the Holocaust victims.
- 5 See, e.g., *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 24, 1949, and a report about Chief Rabbi Herzog, who visited the Belgian consulate, where he received parchments of Torah scrolls that were burned by the Nazis during the war and were brought from Belgium by a clergyman.
- 6 The 10th of Tevet was the day when, according to the Bible, the Babylonian siege around Jerusalem started (2 Kings 25:1–2). On this subject, see Rabbi Yaacov Steinberger, “Ha-asarah be-tevet, yom ha-zikaron la-shoah asher

hafakh le-yom ha-kadish ha-klali,” *Shanah-be-Shanah* (1991): 378–85. Current research does not deal with the ultra-Orthodox perception of Holocaust commemoration, a subject that deserves a separate study.

7 *Hatsofeh*, Jan. 10, 1949.

8 See preliminary reports about the future ceremony in *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 11, 1949, and *Ha-arets*, June 23, 1949. *Hatsofeh* (June 23, 1949) describes the arrival of Simon Wiesenthal, who at that time served as vice chairman of the Jewish Austrian Refugee Organization and who escorted the glass coffin. *Hatsofeh* (June 24, 1949) further reports on the many members of the public who visited the podium where the coffin lay in state. Some people took advantage of the opportunity to place on top of the box the remains of ashes and other objects that had been kept by them since the end of the war. *Ha-arets* (June 27, 1949) reports that the burial of the ashes in the Sanhedriya Cemetery was only temporary and that the ashes would be reburied in due course in the Mount of Olives Cemetery, which was the main Jewish burial place before 1948.

9 See, e.g., Israel Diskin’s letter to the editor in *Hatsofeh*, June 24, 1949, where he suggested burying the ashes on Mount Zion, near David’s Tomb.

10 *Hatsofeh*, Sept. 21, 1949.

11 *Hatsofeh*, Sept. 11, 1949. It appears that the religious items were temporarily stored in an empty house in the Katamon neighborhood.

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- 12 *Ha-boker*, Nov. 2, 1949.
- 13 *Hatsofeh*, Apr. 3, 1946.
- 14 *Hatsofeh*, Dec. 5, 1949.
- 15 For the Mount Zion Committee's regulations and mission, see Israel State Archives (hereafter ISA), S98 GL-6/6261 and S98 GL-10/6316.
- 16 *Hatsofeh*, Dec. 29 and 30, 1949. On this ceremony, see Pinhas Peli's correspondence, "Reshimot Yerushalmiyot," *Hatsofeh*, Jan. 2, 1950. For an interesting parallel between the ritual on Mount Zion and the burial of "Jewish soap" in other parts of Israel, see Zeev Vilnai, *Matsevo kodesh be-Erets Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1952), 427, where he mentions Safed's elders, who in 1949 buried pieces of "Jewish soap" in the burial cave of Rabbi Yehuda Bar-Ilai outside the city. For a similar description and for details of another burial ceremony that took place near Rabbi Tarfon's tomb, see Yosef Hagelili, *Sefer meron* (Jerusalem, 1988), 60.
- 17 ISA, S78 G-12/396: a letter from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to the Emblems Committee, July 16, 1950.
- 18 The name Holocaust Cellar was first mentioned in *Hatsofeh*, July 21, 1950, where Kahana's essay "Yom evel le-dorot" was also published. The commemoration site was erected inside an underground basement below one of the Ottoman buildings that stood to the east of David's Tomb. It seems that the name was intended to intensify the dramatic character and uniqueness of the place.
- 19 S. Z. Kahana, "Ha-shofar she-huhzar," *Hatsofeh*, Aug. 25, 1950. On Sept. 3, *Hatsofeh* also reported on the jacket made of Torah scrolls. Kahana made extensive use of the *Hatsofeh* daily to publicize his ideas. This newspaper was the National Religious Party's mouthpiece and a convenient stage for Kahana to air his ideas about the development of the Jewish holy places and their importance.
- 20 On the Passover Haggadot, see *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 27, 1950. On the etrog, see *Hatsofeh*, Aug. 14, 1951.
- 21 *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 19, 1951.
- 22 The verse was taken from the daily Jewish paper *Ha-arets*, Apr. 24, 1951.
- 23 *Hatsofeh*, Jan. 14, 1953.
- 24 S. Z. Kahana, *Agadot har Tsiyon* (Tel Aviv, 1965), 89; S. Z. Kahana, "Har tsiyon ba-hoveh," *Luah Yerushalayim* 12 (1952): 244; ISA, S98 GL-2/6370: an architectural proposal for building the "Pillar of Tears" by Meir Ben-Uri, July 5, 1964.
- 25 *Ha-arets*, Dec. 7, 1950; *Hatsofeh*, Dec. 19, 1950, including a photo of the glass coffin mentioned above; *Ha-arets*, Dec. 29, 1950.
- 26 S. Z. Kahana, "Martef ha-shoah be-har tsiyon: le-zekher yom ha-shoah yud be-tevet," *Hatsofeh*, Dec. 28, 1952. See there his description of the two maps on display, the first showing the number of Jews murdered during the Holocaust and the other presenting the extermination camps. See also S. Z. Kahana, "Har tsiyon: smalav ve-agadotav," *Hatsofeh*, May 20, 1958.

- 27 ISA, S98 GL-15/6315: a letter from Mordechai Shirshblum to Ben-Zion Dinur, the minister of education, Sept. 10, 1954.
- 28 S. Z. Kahana, "Ha-mashmaut ha-simlit leumit shel martef ha-shoah (le-yom ha-zikaron la-shoah)," *Hatsofeh*, Dec. 16, 1956.
- 29 See Bar, "Re-Creating Jewish Sanctity in Jerusalem."
- 30 Yaakov Pinkerfeld, *Al darkhei ha-omanut ha-yehudit* (Tel Aviv, 1957), 128.
- 31 Kahana, *Agadot*, 11. See also State of Israel, Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Madrikh la-mekomot ha-kedoshim be-hashgahat misrad ha-datot* (n.p., n.d.), which includes a map and details about the various sites on Mount Zion.
- 32 See *Ha-boker*, June 13, 1958, commentary: "We should bind together the commandment of the exodus from Europe and the last Holocaust's bitter herbs as well as those that had taken place before it, from the beginning of the destruction until today."
- 33 *Hatsofeh*, Jan. 12, 1950.
- 34 Ultra-Orthodox Jews usually did not frequent Mount Zion because they strongly opposed Kahanah's activity there and his liberty to "invent" commemoration sites such as King David's tomb or the Holocaust Cellar. See, e.g., *Ha-modia*, Sept. 22, 1954.
- 35 N.a., "Havay dati be-har tsiyon: Be-ad ve-neged," *Hatsofeh*, Nov. 30, 1951. The Muslim Dajani family occupied the place through 1948.
- 36 Yaakov Yehonatan, "Har tsiyon u-ma she-neeram alav," *Hatsofeh*, Sept. 12, 1956.
- 37 Kahana, "Ha-mashmaut ha-simlit leumit shel martef ha-shoah."
- 38 One of the main points of disagreement between the religious-Zionists and Mapai (the Israeli Labor Party) regarding Holocaust commemoration was centered on whether to emphasize Jewish martyrdom or Jewish courage—such as was manifested in the Warsaw Ghetto. In 1946, while addressing the Ha-poel Ha-mizrahi convention on "our duties to the Diaspora," Kahana said: "There is one point that they want to blot out, namely that our martyrs died while reciting 'Shma Yisrael.' They want to fill the will [of the Holocaust victims] with foreign content. But the will had different content: martyrdom. This content should have a prominent and central place as we commemorate the Diaspora. This subject has a dynamic power that leads, also here in the Land of Israel, to great conclusions and huge activities" (*Hatsofeh*, Apr. 3, 1946).
- 39 Roni Stauber, *Ha-lekah la-dor: Shoah u-gvurah ba-mahashavah hatsiburit ba-arets bi-shnot ha-hamishim* (Jerusalem, 2000), 135–42. The month of Nissan was seen in the Jewish tradition as a month of joy and merriment, during which no pleas are normally made during prayers. The religious representatives claimed that, because of this, a mourning day for the Holocaust should not be set on the 27th of Nissan.
- 40 Rabbi Mordechai Hacoheh, "Yom 'yad va-shem' ahid le-khol yisrael," *Hatsofeh*, May 28, 1953; Dalia Ofer, "Mah ve-ad kamah

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- lizkur min ha-Shoah: Zikhron ha-Shoah bi-mdinat Yisrael basor ha-rishon le-kiyumah,” in *Atsmaut: 50 ha-shanim ha-rishonot: Kovetz mehkarim benthumi*, ed. Anita Shapira (Jerusalem, 1998), 171–93.
- 41 Stauber, *Ha-lekah la-dor*, 61–83.
- 42 Yehodith Tydor Baumel, “‘Zikhron olam,’ tfilot vi-yemei evel le-ahar ha-Shoah le-zekher korbenot ha-Shoah,” *Sinai* 101 (1988): 281–94.
- 43 For the message from the Chief Rabbinate Council, which set the 10th of Tevet as the commemoration day for the six million, see *Hatsofeh*, Jan. 10, 1949.
- 44 For the commemoration calendar, see S. Z. Kahana, “Hahantsahah ha-masortit likdoshei ha-shoah (le-yom hakedish ha-klali—asarah betevet),” *Hatsofeh*, Jan. 4, 1955.
- 45 See two articles by S. Z. Kahana, “Le-yad ha-kever ha-almoni bemartef ha-shoah,” *Hatsofeh*, Dec. 25, 1955, and “Mount Zion, Its Symbols and Legends,” *Hatsofeh*, May 20, 1958. Kahana also wrote that “The Holocaust Cellar is the grave of the nameless among the six million . . . and next to it the traditional commemoration for the saints is conducted according to custom and tradition: by lighting candles and studying mishnayot for the ascension of their souls” (*Agadot*, 21).
- 46 *Hatsofeh*, Feb. 7, 1950; *Herut*, Feb. 7, 1950.
- 47 *Hatsofeh*, Feb. 7, 1950.
- 48 *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 30, 1950.
- 49 *Hatsofeh*, June 5, 1950. See also Rabbi Pasternak’s message “Hayom—kaf be-nisan—yom haevel likdoshei hungaryah,” *Hatsofeh*, June 10, 1955.
- 50 *Hatsofeh*, June 27, 1950; S. Z. Kahana, “Le-zekher srefat sifrei ha-torah,” *Hatsofeh*, June 29, 1952.
- 51 S. Z. Kahana, “Le-zekher tevah ha-yeladim,” *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 15, 1951; *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 11, 1954; S. Z. Kahana, “Mifalei hantsahah be-har tsiyon uve-meron,” *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 12, 1954; Kahana, *Agadot*, 89.
- 52 *Ha-arets*, Apr. 22, 1952.
- 53 *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 28, 1956.
- 54 S. Z. Kahana, “Yom prots hamilhamah, rishon le-taarikhei ha-shoah,” *Hatsofeh*, Sept. 13, 1957.
- 55 *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 25 and Aug. 9, 1954. The ministry published an annual “Commemoration Almanac” with specific memorial days for the different communities exterminated in the Holocaust; see *Hatsofeh*, June 14, 1955.
- 56 *Hatsofeh*, Dec. 16, 1949.
- 57 S. Z. Kahana, “Ha-or bemediin,” *Hatsofeh*, Dec. 3, 1950.
- 58 *Hatsofeh*, Sept. 23, 1953.
- 59 *Hatsofeh*, May 8, 1951.
- 60 *Hatsofeh*, Apr. 14, 1950, and May 3, 1954.
- 61 S. Z. Kahana, “Yom evel ledorot,” *Hatsofeh*, July 21, 1950.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Ofer, “Mah ve-ad kamah,” 171–93.
- 64 See, e.g., Tydor Baumel, “Zikhron olam.”
- 65 On Yaar ha-Kdoshim, see n.a., *Yad la-Shoah vela-mered* (Jerusalem, 1953), 70–73. See also Yad Vashem’s announcement on the ceremony in the forest, *Hatsofeh*, Apr. 28, 1954, and its description in *Hatsofeh*, Apr. 30, 1954.

- 66 *Hatsofeh*, Nov. 20, 1950.
- 67 *Hatsofeh*, Dec. 29, 1952.
- 68 ISA, S98 GL-15/6315: letter from Shirshblum to Dinur, Sept. 10, 1954.
- 69 Kahana, "Ha-or be-modiin"; Kahana, "Ha-hantsahah hamasortit li-kdoshei ha-shoah."
- 70 For the commemoration of the Jews of Hungary, see *Hatsofeh*, June 18 and 25, 1951, and S. Z. Kahana, "Kaf be-nisan: Yom tsom u-tfilah," *Hatsofeh*, May 13, 1952. On the commemoration of the Jews of Lithuania, see Kahana, "Holocaust Cellar on Mount Zion."
- 71 ISA, S98 GL-15/6315: a letter from the Beit Gnazim Commission, Dec. 27, 1953. See also ISA, 43.3 G-15/6401, with a memorandum from Kahana as the representative of the Mount Zion Committee to the delegates of the United Jewish Appeal.
- 72 *Ha-arets*, Apr. 22, 1952. The Mount Zion Committee emphasized that the different extermination dates of the various communities were established "in accordance with the finds of the special investigation committee." See also Tydor Baumel, "Zikhron olam," on Holocaust memorial plaques in Israeli cemeteries. In Nahalat Yitzhak Cemetery, for example, a special wall was built during the early 1950s where Holocaust survivors could set memorial plates for their exterminated communities.
- 73 *Hatsofeh*, Jan. 2, 1958. See also Yaffa Eliach, "Nitsoleha shel hayarah: Eishyshok," in *Sheerit hapletah, 1944–1948: Ha-shikum vеха-maavak ha-politi, hartsaot vedyunim ba-kenes ha-bein-leumi hashishi shel hokrei ha-shoah, Yerushalayim, 1985*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Avital Saf (Jerusalem, 1990), 505–6. Kahana mentions 2,000 plaques that were placed in the Holocaust Cellar until the 1980s (*Agadot*, 87–88).
- 74 ISA, S98 GL-7/6261: a letter from S. Z. Kahana to Yaakov Ross, the Israeli Tourism Bureau, New York, Nov. 1955. The ceremony included lighting six candles, reciting Psalms, and studying mishnayot, starting with the first letters of the name of the specific village or town.
- 75 S. Z. Kahana, "Ksharim masortiim bein ha-arets vehaftutsot," *Hatsofeh*, Sept. 17, 1954.
- 76 Kahana, *Agadot*, 16, 2219–20. See also Kahana's letter on the transfer of a cornerstone to a synagogue in Long Beach, California (ISA, S98 6261: S. Z. Kahana to Rabbi Morris Schwartz of Long Beach, June 24, 1956).
- 77 *Hatsofeh*, Sept. 5, 1949.
- 78 See, e.g., *Hatsofeh*, Sept. 8, 1953; ISA, 140 GL-11/8576: a review made by S. Z. Kahana, "Hartsiyon: Tokhno ve-agadotav," n.d.; ISA, S98 GL-15/6315: a letter from S. Z. Kahana to "Yisrael tsair" (Young Israel) in Montreal, Dec. 30, 1954.
- 79 S. Z. Kahana, "Simlei ha-havay ha-dati," *Hatsofeh*, Dec. 23, 1951.
- 80 *Hatsofeh*, Nov. 7, 1950.
- 81 ISA, S98 GL-11/6313: a survey by the "Company for the Manufacturing of Religious Items on Mount Zion," on the subject of Holocaust memorials, n.d.

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- 82 S. Z. Kahana, "Al har tsiyon," *Hatsofeh*, Apr. 20, 1951.
- 83 *Divrei ha-Knesset* 14 (1953): 2455.
- 84 ISA, S98 GL-15/6315: letter from Shirshblum to Dinur, Sept. 10, 1954.
- 85 ISA, S98 GL-15/6315: a letter from David Beit-Arieh to S. Z. Kahana, Mount Zion Committee, Apr. 30, 1954.
- 86 ISA, S98 GL-10/14913: a letter from Yehuda Leib Bialer, in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, to Yad Vashem's directorate, Dec. 17, 1958.
- 87 See, e.g., *Ha-dor*, June 6, 1954.
- 88 ISA, S98 GL-10/14913: a letter from Ben-Zion Dinur, chairman of Yad Vashem, to Yaakov Moshe Toledano, minister of religious affairs, Feb. 2, 1959.
- 89 ISA, S98 GL-10/14913: a summary of a conversation between S. Z. Kahana and Yechiel Zrubavel, Sept. 9, 1958; *ibid.*: a letter from the "Traditional Commemoration Committee Near the Holocaust Cellar" to members of the Yad Vashem Council, Sept. 8, 1958.
- 90 See, e.g., S. Z. Kahana, "Yom hazikaron la-shoah," *Hatsofeh*, Jan. 4, 1952, and S. Z. Kahana, "Mered ha-getaut u-mashmauto bitkufatenu," *Hatsofeh*, May 3, 1951.
- 91 For a report about Yad Vashem's building plans, including "a cemetery for the Holocaust martyrs' ashes," see *Hatsofeh*, Apr. 17, 1958.
- 92 See a report in *Hatsofeh*, June 18, 1956, on Yitzhak Shneerson's request from S. Z. Kahana to receive a small bag of ashes from the Holocaust Cellar together with a "sack containing earth from Erets Israel." A letter in *Hatsofeh*, July 1, 1956, reports the Ministry of Religious Affairs' refusal to allow the removal of ashes from Jerusalem.
- 93 *Hatsofeh*, Mar. 17, 1957.
- 94 Binyamin Ishchar, "Al yefutsal efer ha-kdoshim (im kinus hamoatsah shel Yad Va-shem)," *Hatsofeh*, June 17, 1958. Eventually, the said ashes were buried in Yad Vashem's Hall of Remembrance. See also Rabbi Isaac Halevi Herzog, *Psakim u-ktavim*, vol. 5: 158 (Jerusalem, 1990), 639–58.
- 95 We do not have any specific data concerning the number of people taking part in the ceremonies in the Holocaust Cellar. Much more valid information can be found on the number of visitors to King David's tomb, which was estimated to be tens of thousands annually.
- 96 See *Ha-arets*, Apr. 15, 1966, for a critical report on the Holocaust Cellar. S. Z. Kahana's response to this criticism can be found in ISA, S98 GL-2574, May 1, 1966.
- 97 See, e.g., the fourth section in S. Z. Kahana, *Legends of Zion*, trans. S. M. Lehrman (New York, 1986), 87–152, which is dedicated to the Holocaust Cellar.
- 98 Anita Shapira, "Ha-Shoah: Zikaron prati ve-zikaron tsiburi," in Shapira, ed., *Atsmaut: 50 ha-shanim ha-rishonot*, 527–40.
- 99 Maoz Azaryahu, "Mount Herzl: The Creation of Israel's National Cemetery," *Israel Studies* 1 (1996): 46–74.

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