

Yad Vashem (A reflection of the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem)

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Written for Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Observance

Congregation Beth Jacob, Pilgrim Interfaith Clergy, and No Place For Hate

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Five candles set in complete darkness, thousands of mirrors expanding them into infinite points of light,

Gentle voices reading the names of children, their ages, their birthplaces.

One and a half million in all

Each systematically murdered.

Erika Stranska, 14 years old

Franco Cesana, 12 years old

Marketa Zimmerova, 12 years old

In this cylinder of darkness, with barely a reflection of light haunting voices remind us of what was not so gentle in this calm night

Hanus Richard Weinberg, 12 years

Maria Nemeth 13 years

Max Rosenblat, 3 years

One and a half million children, 10 - 12 years, 10 - 12 months

It will take a month and a half - 45 days - 1080 hours - 64,800 minutes - 3,888,000 seconds without ceasing, to recite all their names.

Anguished and alone in the darkness we are free to cry.

Released into the light we are met by a long central hall.

Ten exhibits on either side require us to zig-zag down the hall,

1-2-3-4, crossing over the central path each time but unable to walk down it.

You see, in between there is wire - wire to prevent us from escaping the horror that looks at us from every wall.

I am keenly aware of it and notice my stomach turning into a knot, my pulse quickening.

In the distance I can see the end of this long, long, oh so long corridor and beyond it - Freedom,

But there is no way out, BUT through

Through the photographs of the rise of Nazism

Through Hitler's sickening, sneering face

Through the lies of propaganda and the glorification of genocide

Through the ghettos of starving families

Through the sunken, searching eyes

Through the visual accounts of survivors retelling their stories with pain encased faces

Through the numbered arms and the star-sewn shirts

By exhibit five I am holding my breath as I look in horror at the horror of humanity's inhumanity
- struck with every fiber of my being by the face of evil.

I want to run and cannot understand how others do not feel the same.

They must - They must
But we know we cannot

Brilliant, I tell myself standing in the corridor, a moment's respite

Brilliant. Brilliant that these wires make it impossible for me to leave, while also making it
possible for me to feel the desperation of no escape.