

Howard Cwick, Liberator Eyewitness to History

The following glossary has been created to assist students and teachers with potentially unfamiliar words, phrases, or concepts in Howard's testimony.

Antisemitism² Prejudices toward Jews or discrimination against them.

Buchenwald concentration camp¹ Built in the summer of 1937 near the city of Weimar, the Buchenwald concentration camp grew to include more than 88 satellite and auxiliary camps. Buchenwald's commandants were Karl Koch (1937-1941) and Hermann Pister (1942-1945). By the end of 1944, there were 63,048 inmates in Buchenwald; the number rose to 112,000 by February 1945. The approach of the Soviet Army caused the SS to evacuate prisoners from concentration and labor camps in the east toward camps in the west, and Buchenwald became one of the destinations. In April, Pister ordered the evacuation of Buchenwald, prompting thousands to be sent on to the Mittelbau, Dachau and Flossenbürg concentration camps, as well as to the Theresienstadt ghetto. As American troops approached the camp on April 11, the SS fled; approximately 21,000 prisoners were liberated.

Displaced persons³ Tens of thousands of homeless people created by the war, including many survivors of the Holocaust, who had no home or country to which they could return.

Ich bin ein Jude —A German phrase meaning “I am a Jew.”

Judaism¹ The tenets of Judaism are outlined by the Torah. A Jew is one who is either born into the people of Israel, thus inheriting his/her status, or voluntarily converts to it. As a culture, as well as a society of laws, beliefs and faith, Judaism is based on the events recorded in the Torah, which was given to Moses and the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. Judaism follows a set of principles as outlined in the Torah. There are several movements in the Jewish religion, for example: Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism, Reform Judaism, Reconstructionist Judaism, Hasidic Judaism, Ultra-Orthodox Judaism and Traditional Judaism.

Kapo² A concentration camp prisoner selected to oversee other prisoners on labor details. The term is often used generically for any concentration camp prisoner to whom the SS gave authority over other prisoners.

Kosher¹ Rules and regulations in Judaism that determine the foods that are permitted for consumption by the Jewish people. These rules also outline the process by which animals may be slaughtered and prepared.

Liberation¹ To be freed from the control of a foreign or oppressive government.

Observant⁵ Careful in observing (as rites, laws, or customs) as in pious and religiously observant families

Orthodox Judaism¹ In Judaism, the term *orthodoxy* first appeared in 1795. It has been widely used since the beginning of the 19th century to differentiate it from the Reform movement. Orthodox Judaism describes a religious orientation that stresses submission to the authority of halakhah, i.e., the entire legal system of Judaism. Orthodoxy places strict limits on the impact that social or political forces may have upon the behavior and norms of Jewish life in any given historical context.

Shoah³ A Hebrew word meaning “catastrophe,” referring to the Holocaust

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Shul⁴ Yiddish word for synagogue or Jewish house of prayer.

Wasser, wasser —A German phrase meaning “Water, water.”

Yiddish⁴ A language that combines elements of German and Hebrew.

Yiddish culture¹ Yiddish culture is a part of general Jewish culture, though it is specifically the facet that is based on the Yiddish language. Yiddish culture is an essential component of the culture and experience of Ashkenazi Jewry. It includes religious and secular literature, music, theater and folklore. Yiddish culture is the ancestral background of approximately 80 percent of the world’s Jews.

Source of Definitions

¹ USC Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archives Search Terms and Definitions

² The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum online glossary and/or *Holocaust Encyclopedia*

³ *Echoes and Reflections, a Multimedia Curriculum on the Holocaust*, Glossary

⁴ Florida Center for Instructional Technology A Teachers Guide to the Holocaust, Glossary

⁵ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2009