

# Lessons of the Holocaust



Illustration of a German soldier firing his weapon at a Jewish mother and child.

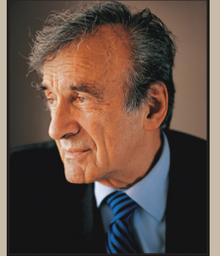
The horrors of the Nazi persecutions of Jewish people and other groups are difficult to grapple with. Nonetheless, it is remarkable how so many survivors put their experiences behind them to renew their lives in many parts of the world. This ability to rebuild shattered lives is a hallmark of humanity.

*"The principle that governs the biblical vision of society is, 'Thou shall not stand idly by when your fellow man is hurting, suffering, or being victimized.'*

*It is because that injunction was ignored or violated, that the catastrophe involving such multitudes occurred. The victims perished not only because of the killers, but also because of the apathy of the bystanders. Those who perished were victims of Nazism and of society --though to different degrees.*

*What astonished us after the torment, after the tempest, was not that so many killers killed so many victims, but that so few cared about us at all."*

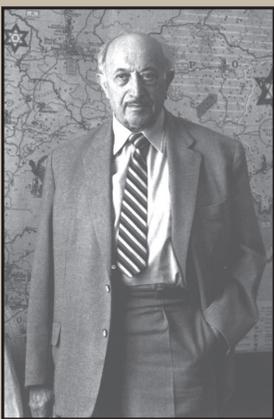
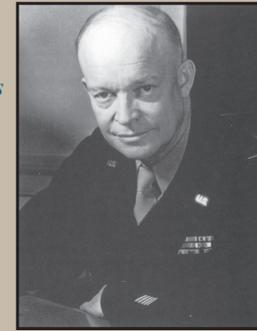
Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor  
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate



*"The things I saw beggar description..... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick.... George Patton would not even enter (the room). I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda.' "*

*"I visited every nook and cranny of the camp, because I felt it my duty to be in a position from then on to testify at first hand about these things in case there ever grew up at home the belief or assumption that "the stories of Nazi brutality were just propaganda." . .....I felt that the evidence should be immediately placed before the Americans and British publics in a fashion that would leave no room for cynical doubt."*

General Dwight D. Eisenhower,  
Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, 1945  
from a letter to Chief of Staff George Marshall, April, 1945



Simon Wiesenthal  
Holocaust survivor  
Wiesenthal Center  
Vienna, Austria

*"For me was the Holocaust not only a Jewish tragedy, but also a human tragedy."*

Picture of the "Shalom" sculpture.  
Gerry-Sue and Norman Arnold Jewish Community Campus.  
Katie and Irwin Kahn Jewish Community Center, Columbia, SC.

## Key Reasons to Study the Holocaust

**The Nazi genocide in Europe between 1933 and 1945, is a complicated and difficult subject to understand. It is a pivotal period in history that requires all humanity to know and examine.**

### The Holocaust ...

- Fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization. It was an unprecedented attempt to murder a whole people and to extinguish its culture.
- Exposed the use and abuse of power, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals, organizations and nations when confronted with human rights violations. It heightens awareness of the potential for genocide in the contemporary world.
- Develops an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, anti-Semitism, and stereotyping in any society. Develops an awareness of the value of diversity in a pluralistic society and encourages sensitivity to the positions of minorities.
- Demonstrated how a modern nation could utilize its technological expertise and bureaucratic infrastructure to implement destructive policies ranging from social engineering to genocide.
- Provides a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silent and indifferent in the face of the oppression of others.
- Illustrates the converging factors that led to the disintegration of democratic values. Many historical, social, religious, political, and economic elements cumulatively resulted in the Holocaust.
- Is the responsibility of all citizens to learn to identify the danger signals, and to know when to react.



The above Key Reasons are an edited version from the  
International Task Force on Holocaust Memory, History and Research.