Vocabulary

**Abstraction**—a generality; an idea or thought separated from concrete reality

**Achtung**—German for attention

**Aden**—Former Middle Eastern British colony, now part of Yemen.

**Aryan**—In Nazi ideology, the pure, superior Germanic race.

**annihilate**—destroy completely, exterminate

**apathy**—lack of interest or emotion, indifference

**appeasing**—satisfying; relieving

**Austerlitz**—Parisian railroad station for eastbound trains. Austerlitz was the name of a Czech city.

**Babylonian captivity**—Babylonians destroyed the first temple in Jerusalem in 86 B.C.E. and exiled the Jews to Babylonia.

**barometer**—literally, an instrument for measuring atmospheric pressure; an indicator of change

**beastial**—like a beast; cruel and savage

**billeted**—lodged; used to refer to temporary lodging of military personnel in private homes or other private establishments

**base**—ignoble, inferior, undignified

**benediction**—a formal blessing; act of calling upon God during a religious service

**blandishment**—flattering remarks that are meant to be persuasive

**boche or bosche**—WWI derogatory French slang for a German, usually a soldier.
Cabbala—Jewish mysticism, including numerology.

the captivity of Babylon—the period from 597 B.C. to 538 B.C. during which Jerusalem was conquered by King Nebuchadnezzar and the Jewish people were sent into captivity in Babylon

Cavalry—literally, the place near Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified; here, used metaphorically to mean an experience of intense agony or grief

charnel house—A building used to house corpses and bones.

compulsory—required; that which must be done

compatriots—fellow countrymen

concentration camp—Camps that were primarily used for slave labor, holding camps or transit camps.

constraint—restriction, especially of feelings and behaviors

countenance—face or features of the face

crucible—container or vessel made of a substance that can withstand extreme heat; a severe trial or test

dearth camp—Camps dedicated to the efficient murder of Jews and other victims; e.g. Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmo, Madjanek, Sobibor, Treblinka. The term was also used for concentration camps where thousands died of starvation and disease.

Death’s head—Skull insignia for S.S. brigades working in concentration camps.

derision—scorn, ridicule

the destruction of the temple—King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured the Jewish city of Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in 587 B.C.

dysentery—intestinal inflammation causing abdominal pain and severe diarrhea; often fatal if left untreated in the very young or old or in those who are weakened by hunger or other disease

edict—an official public proclamation or order issued by an authority, such as a governmental or military authority.

emigration—the act of leaving one country or region to settle in another
expounding—stating in detail; explaining
expulsion—driving out, especially by force
fascism—A system of government with centralized authority under a dictator, stringent socioeconomic controls, suppression of the opposition through terror and censorship and usually a policy of belligerent nationalism and racism.
functionaries—people who perform certain expected duties, especially official functions
Gestapo—German acronym for the German Secret State Police, part of the SS notorious for terrorism against enemies of the state.
Guerrillas—small groups of soldiers, often volunteers, who make surprise attacks and raids behind enemy lines
ghetto—The confinement of Jews in a set-apart area of a city. The first exclusively Jewish ghetto was in Venice in 1516.
gypsy—Pejorative term for Roma or Romany, an ethnic group with roots in India which suffered large losses in the Holocaust
harangued—scolded, especially in a noisy and bullying way
Hasidism (Hasidic)—Movement of Orthodox Judaism with strong mystical and emotional elements.
hermetically—in an airtight way
Himmler, Heinrich (1900—1945)—Head of SS and principal planner of Jews’ total extermination.
Hitler, Adolf (1889—1945)—Dictator of Germany, 1933—194.
Horthy, Admiral Miklos (1868—1957)—Regent of Hungary, 1920—1944, who was forced by the Nazis to relinquish power to the Nylias Hungarian Fascist party after Nazi invasion.
implored—begged; pleaded sincerely
incite—to urge to act; to provoke
inconsiderable—unimportant, small
indeterminate—indefinite; vague; subtle
inert—motionless; lacking the ability to move or act

interminable—endless or seeming to be endless

Job—Biblical figure who has come to symbolize suffering.

Kaddish—A prayer in Aramaic praising God. The mourner’s Kaddish is said for the dead.

kapos—Nazi concentration camp prisoners who were given special privileges in return for supervising other prisoners on work crews; often common criminals who were notorious for their brutality toward fellow inmates

knell—the sound of a bell, especially of a bell run slowly at a funeral; often used metaphorically to mean a bad omen

lamentation—an expression of grief and sadness

Lazarus—A man described in the Books of John and Luke as having been raised from the dead by Jesus.

lorries—trucks

lucidity—clear-headedness; clarity; rational understanding

los—German for "Go on!"

Maimonides (1135—1204)—Jewish rabbi, physician and philosopher.

meager—of small quantity; not adequate

Mengele, Dr. Josef (1911—1978)—Auschwitz physician notorious for so-called medical experiments performed on inmates, especially twins and dwarves.

Messiah—Greek translation of Hebrew Mashiach, the anointed one.

mountebanks—fakes; charlatans or tricksters

Musulman—German for Muslim. Camp slang for a prisoner who is too weak to walk, work, or stand, and therefore marked for death. Believed to derive from prisoner’s resemblance to a Muslim in prayer.

nocturnal—of or happening during the night

numerology—an occult system, built around numbers, of foretelling the future and exploring the unknown
Nyilas party—Hungarian for Arrow Cross, a fascist anti-semitic party which assumed power in late 1944 and assisted the SS in deportations of Jews.

oblivion—state of being completely forgotten

Passover—In Hebrew, Pesach. Greek word for the celebration of the exodus of Jewish people from slavery in Egypt.

Pentecost—In Hebrew, Shavuot, the celebration of the giving of the Torah.

phylacteries—In Hebrew, tefillin. Greek word for two black leather cubes, worn during daily morning prayer which contain verses from the Torah.

pillage—to loot; to rob of property

premonition—a feeling that something is about to happen, especially something bad.

privations—hardships; lack of necessities of everyday life

rabbi—a scholar and teacher of Jewish law; the spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation.

raucous—loud and rough sounding; hoarse

Red Army—the regular army of the former Soviet Union

reprieve—a postponement of punishment; a temporary relief

Rosh Hashana—Jewish New Year.

SS—Abbreviation of Schutzstaffel (Defense Protective Units). Notorious for implementing European Jews’ extermination.

sage—a person who is very wise, especially one whose great wisdom is the result of age and experience

sanctity—holiness; sacredness

semblance—appearance, resemblance

Spanish Inquisition—Brutal campaign by Roman Catholic church to punish nonbelievers including Jews and Muslims.

stupefied—stunned; amazed
summarily—promptly and without formality

Synagogue—A Jewish house of worship and study.

Talmud—The most important compilation of Jewish oral tradition.

Temple—Holiest place in Judaism, located in Jerusalem. Biblically ordained sacrifices were performed here. Built and destroyed twice.

treatise—a formal article or book on a particular subject

truncheons—short, thick cudgels or clubs

unremittingly—constantly; without interruption

vigilance—the state of watchfulness; alertness, especially to danger

visionary—having the nature of a vision; unreal

wizened—shriveled, dried up

yellow star—Nazis forced Jews to wear a cloth badge with Jew written in the center of a yellow 6 pointed star.

Yom Kippur—Day of Atonement. Holiest day of Jewish year when Jews fast and pray for forgiveness of their sins.

Zionism—Political movement advocating the establishment of a Jewish state.

Zohar—From the Hebrew meaning light or splendor. One of the major works of the Cabbala.