



Every year thousands of Jews gather at the monument to the Six Million, which Herman Wald executed at the Westpark Cemetery in Johannesburg. Each fist represents one million Jews murdered by the Nazis.

MEMORIALS ARE NOT FOR THE DEAD BUT THE LIVING

"WE NEED memorials because people forget. Memorials are not for the dead, but for the living." The speaker was Sarah Gertrude Millin - the famous South African Jewish writer. "Every time we are in danger of forgetting the Six Million dead this figure will remind us", she said. "In this massive sculpture, Herman Wald has devised a fitting memorial to the Six Million Jews killed by Hitler".

by A Herald Reporter

She was addressing a group of Jewish leaders in the Johannesburg studio of Herman Wald - while towering over the gathering stood the figure she was speaking about - a Hebrew figure, nearly 4 metres high, tearing his garments in the act of "Kria" - and "Kria" was the name which the artist had given the work.

This was Edgar Bernstein's report in the 'Jewish Guild Annual' some thirty years ago.

The sculpture now stands in bronze, erected in the grounds of the Jewish Old Aged Home in Sandringham. The head of the massive work is almost a self-portrait, and the general posture of the figure with its proud head flung back in grim defiance seems to indicate the artist's determination to emphasise the will which overcomes sorrow and despair in the hope of a better world.

Later, in a world-wide competition, Herman Wald was selected to design and execute his monument to the Six Million, which stands in the Westpark Cemetery in Johannesburg. This monument depicts



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MEMORIALS FOR THE LIVING

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six mighty bronze fists, each almost two metres high, bursting out of the ground as a protest of the Dead, each fist representing one million Jews who perished under Hitler, and each gripping a Shofar, standing 6 metres high, creating three great arches - arches of trial and tribulation through which the Jewish people have gone during all the generations in the Diaspora.

In the centre there is a 4½ metre spiralling flame-shaped Eternal Light, stylised through the medium of the Hebrew lettering "Lor Tertzach" - "Thou shalt not kill".

Every year the Jewish community joins together at the Memorial to share the anguish and togetherness and the pledge - "Never Again", that is Yom Hashoa - Holocaust Day. 1960 was a busy year for Herman Wald. Commissioned by Mr Harry Oppenheimer on the suggestion of the then Mayor, Councillor Alec Gorshel, Wald created his "Ballerinas of the Game Reserve", a light hearted fountain of 18 bronze leaping Impala, erected in the centre of Johannesburg.

"A hundred years ago" the sculptor said at the time, "impala were leaping around here and now they have come back to claim the ground".

Wald was commissioned again that year by Mr Oppenheimer when he created his Diamond Diggers Monument in Kimberley, comprising the figures of 5 pioneer diamond diggers, holding a huge diamond washing sieve high above their heads.

It stands in the Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Garden of Kimberley Civic Centre, and is one of the prize attractions in that historic city.

Herman Wald was born in Kolosvar, Hungary, on July 7th, 1906 - one of the eight children of Rabbi Jacob and Pearl Wald.



Herman Wald's "Ballerinas of the Game Reserve", a fountain of 18 bronze leaping impala, erected in the centre of Johannesburg.

Descended from seven generations of Rabbis, he grew up in an atmosphere of old-world Jewish Orthodoxy, reinforced by a robust Chassidic tradition which left a deep and lasting impression on his life and work.

A sensitive and impressionable youth, he was early influenced by works of art, but was expected to follow in his father's footsteps. Only when he had completed a larger-than-life bust of Theodor Herzl in the secrecy of his mother's storeroom, was his father truly aware of his son's talent, and thus did not oppose him when the youngster announced his intention to take up art seriously in Budapest.

Though bursaries and by money earned singing in the Synagogue choirs, he studied in Vienna and Berlin. When he left with the rise of Hitler, he worked and taught in Paris and London.

On the suggestion of his brother, Marcus Wald, (who continuing the Rabbinic tradition, was Rabbi of East London), he made his way to South Africa, and established a studio and an art school, and held various exhibitions in South Africa.

He served in the South African forces in 1940 in the Engineers Camouflage Unit, and after his discharge in 1944, a period of great creative activity followed. In 1952 he travelled to the United States, and held a successful exhibition in New York, where his work was compared to that of Jacob Epstein.

The atmosphere of his early life never forsook him, and his delightful and endearing sculpture "sketches" of scenes and characters from Jewish shtetl life are treasured by those art lovers who have acquired them, in South Africa, England, Europe, Israel and the United



Five diamond diggers hold a huge diamond washing sieve above their heads. This work of Herman Wald's stands at the Diamond Diggers Monument in Kimberley.

States. In 1967, when the Berea Hebrew Congregation opened its new Synagogue, the members had a new talking point - Herman Wald's symbolic sculpture, "The Wings of the Shechinah", where the Holy Ark is encircled by black granite and flanked by two awe-inspiring six metre high burnished copper wings, with the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, also in fiery copper, set high above it.

The presence of those wings has given many silent blessings to the young couples who have stood facing them under the Chupah, on the threshold of a new life together.

In 1970 Herman Wald was commissioned by the Standard bank of Salisbury, as it was then called, to execute his sculpture of 17 great birds swooping down to the water, but tragically suffered a drastic heart attack and passed away in that city.

He was brought back to Johannesburg and buried at the head of his Martyrs' Monument at Westpark, on his birthday, July 7.

The commission was carried out by his son.



Sculptor Herman Wald, adds the finishing touches to one of his pieces.

Shalom and best wishes

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