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Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood

The ghost of the Holocaust is ever present in Israel, in the lives and nightmares of the survivors, and in the absence of the victims. In this compelling and disturbing analysis, Idith Zertal, a leading member of the new generation of revisionist historians in Israel, deals with the ways Israel has appropriated and used the memory of the Holocaust in order to define and legitimize its existence and politics. Drawing on a wide range of sources, many of them new, the author exposes the pivotal role of the Holocaust in Israel's public sphere, in its project of nation-building, its politics of power, and in its perception of the conflict with the Palestinians and military occupation of their territories. Zertal argues that the centrality of the Holocaust in Israeli life has led to a culture of death and victimhood which permeates Israeli society, its rituals, and its self-image. This is an important and penetrating book which offers an entirely new perspective on Israel, its history, and the construction of national identity.

IDITH ZERTAL was for many years a cultural and political journalist and essayist in Israel. She is now teaching history and cultural studies at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her previous publications include *From Catastrophe to Power* (1998) and *The Lords of the Land* (in Hebrew: 2004).

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Translated by

Chaya Galai



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Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page ix</i>
Introduction	1
1 The sacrificed and the sanctified	9
2 Memory without rememberers	52
3 From the People's Hall to the Wailing Wall	91
4 Between <i>Love of the World</i> and <i>Love of Israel</i>	128
5 Yellow territories	164
<i>Biographies</i>	209
<i>Glossary</i>	217
<i>Bibliography</i>	223
<i>Index</i>	231

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