

# Night Glossary

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*Developed in collaboration with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Hill and Wang, the publisher of Night.*

## A

**achtung:** German for "Attention!"

**Aden:** a former Middle Eastern British colony, now part of Yemen

**anti-Semitism:** hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic minority group, often accompanied by social, economic, or political discrimination

**Appelplatz (Appellplatz):** German for roll call square

**Aryan:** in Nazi Germany, non-Jewish and non-Gypsy Caucasians. Northern Europeans with especially "Nordic" features such as blonde hair and blue eyes were considered by the so-called race scientists to be the most superior of Aryans, members of a "master race."

**Auschwitz:** the largest Nazi Concentration Camp complex, located 37 miles west of Kraków, Poland. The Auschwitz Main Camp (Auschwitz I) was established in 1940 as a concentration camp. In 1942, a killing center was established at Auschwitz-Birkenau (Auschwitz II). In 1941, Auschwitz-Monowitz (Auschwitz III) was established as a forced labor camp and included among its inmates prisoners who worked for the I.G. Farben synthetic rubber plant, called Buna Works. More than 100 subcamps and labor detachments were administratively connected to Auschwitz III.

**automaton:** an individual who acts in a mechanical fashion

## B

**Babylonian captivity:** in the history of the Jews, the period from the fall of Jerusalem and the conquest of the Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. until the return of the Jews to Jerusalem following a decree of the Persian King Cyrus in 538 B.C.E.

**Beadle, Moishe the:** a beadle ushers and preserves order during services. Everyone in Sighet refers to Eliezer's instructor in the Kabbalah as "Moishe the Beadle" rather than by his last name to denote his function at religious services.

**benediction:** a blessing, which often concludes religious services

**billeted:** to assign lodging to soldiers

**Birkenau:** also known as Auschwitz II (see [Auschwitz](#)), Birkenau contained the large-scale killing apparatus at Auschwitz. It also housed thousands of concentration camp prisoners deployed at forced labor.

**blandishment:** something that tends to coax or cajole; flattery

**Boche:** a derogatory French slang term for a German

**Buchenwald:** a large concentration camp established in 1937 by the Nazis located in north-central Germany, near the city of Weimar

**Buna, Bunaweke:** plant established by I.G. Farben on the site of Auschwitz III (Monowitz) in German-occupied Poland. I.G. Farben executives aimed to produce synthetic rubber and synthetic fuel (gasoline), using forced labor. Despite the death of thousands of forced laborers, I.G. Farben never produced any synthetic rubber and was unable to mass produce synthetic fuel. (See [Auschwitz.](#))

C–E

**cabbala** (see [Kabbalah](#)): a body of mystical teachings of rabbinical origin, often based on an esoteric interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures

**colic:** severe abdominal pain caused by spasm, obstruction, or distention of any of the hollow viscera, such as the intestines

**concentration camp:** in Germany and German-occupied Europe, camps established by the Nazi regime and managed by the SS to detain and, if necessary, kill so-called enemies of the state, including Jews, Gypsies, political and religious opponents, members of national resistance movements, homosexuals, and others. Imprisonment in a concentration camp was of unlimited duration, was not linked to a specific act, and was not subject to any judicial review.

**conflagration:** a large disastrous fire

**crematory (or crematorium):** an establishment containing a furnace for reducing dead bodies to ashes by burning

**crucible:** a vessel in which a substance is heated to a high temperature

**death's head:** the skull insignia, worn on the collar lapel, for SS units that administered and guarded the concentration camps

**emaciate:** to cause to lose flesh so as to become very thin

F–G

**fascism:** a political movement that exalts the collective nation, and often race, above the individual and that advocates: a centralized totalitarian state headed by a charismatic leader; expansion of the nation, preferably by military force, forcible suppression and sometimes physical annihilation of opponents—real and perceived. Fascist states demand total personal commitment of the individual to the collective whole (nation, race) and often organize economic production around preparation for total war and extreme exploitation of occupied territories

**Galicia:** a province of Poland ruled by Habsburg Austria in the 19th Century and the Polish Republic between the two world wars. After World War II, Galicia became a part of West Ukraine.

**Gestapo:** the German Secret State Police, which was under [SS](#) control and command

**ghetto:** a confined area of a city in which members of a minority group are compelled to live because of social, legal, or economic pressure. The first exclusively Jewish ghetto was in Venice, Italy, in 1516.

**Gypsy:** a traditional term, sometimes perceived as pejorative, for Roma, a nomadic people, whose ancestors migrated to Europe from India. The authorities of Nazi Germany and its Axis partners persecuted and killed large numbers of Roma during the era of the Holocaust.

H-J

**Haifa:** a city of present day Israel, in the northwest, on the Bay of Haifa, an inlet of the Mediterranean Sea

**harangued:** to deliver a long pompous speech, especially one delivered before a gathering

**Hasidic:** pertaining to a Jewish sect of the second century B.C. opposed to Hellenism and devoted to the strict observance of the ritual law

**Hasidism:** a movement of Orthodox Judaism with strong mystical and emotional elements that developed among Eastern European Jews in the 18th Century. (Hasid: a member of the movement; Hasidic: pertaining to the movement)

**hermetically sealed:** airtight

**Himmler, Heinrich:** (1900–1945) Reichsführer-SS and Chief of German Police, a position which included supreme command over the Gestapo, the concentration camps, and the Waffen-SS. After 1943, Minister of the Interior of Nazi Germany; principal planner for the attempt of Nazi Germany to kill all European Jews.

**Hitler, Adolf:** (1889–1945) Führer of the National Socialist Movement (1921–1945); Reich Chancellor of Germany 1933–1945; Führer of the German Nation (1934–1945)

**Horthy, Admiral Miklós:** (1868–1957) Regent of Hungary, 1920–1944., In March 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary and forced Horthy to relinquish power to pro-German elements prepared to deport the Hungarian Jews. In October 1944, Horthy was overthrown in an SS-backed coup that brought to power the Arrow Cross ([Nyilas](#)), a Hungarian fascist movement.

**invective:** insulting or abusive language

**Job:** in the Old Testament, a man whose faith was severely tested by Satan, with God's permission. Figuratively, any long-suffering person can be said to be "as patient as Job."

K–L

**Kabbalah (or kabbala or cabbala or cabala):** a body of mystical teachings of rabbinical origin, often based on an esoteric interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures

**Kaddish:** a Jewish prayer recited in the daily synagogue services and by mourners after the death of a close relative

**kapo:** a concentration camp prisoner selected to oversee other prisoners on labor details. The term is often used generically for any concentration camp prisoner whom the [SS](#) gave authority over other prisoners.

**Kaschau (German); Košice (Slovak); Kassa (Hungarian):** the transport train carrying the Jews from Sighet makes a stop in Kaschau, a part of Slovakia that was annexed by Hungary in the autumn of 1938 and was returned to Slovakia in 1945.

**Kommando:** German word for detachment, here a detachment of concentration camp prisoners at forced labor

**lorries:** automotive trucks used especially for transporting freight

**los:** German for "Get moving!"

M–O

**Maimonides:** (1135–1204) Jewish rabbi, physician and philosopher

**manacled:** handcuffed

**[Mengele, Dr. Josef:](#)** (1911–1979) SS physician assigned to Auschwitz Concentration Camp; notorious for conducting so-called medical experiments on inmates, especially twins and dwarves

**Messiah:** the anticipated savior of the Jews

**Muselman (Muselmann or musulman):** German for "Muslim." Concentration camp slang for a prisoner who is so weak he appears apathetic about living or dying. Possibly derived from the perceived resemblance of a prisoner in a Muslim prayer position.

**Nyilas Party:** Hungarian for Arrow Cross, a fascist anti-Semitic party that assumed power in late 1944 and assisted the SS in deportations of Jews in the autumn of 1944

P–R

**Passover:** a Jewish holiday commemorating the Hebrews' liberation from slavery in Egypt

**Pentecost:** a Christian feast commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles

**penury:** severe poverty

**pestilential:** deadly; poisonous

**phylacteries** either of two small square leather boxes containing slips inscribed with scriptural passages and traditionally worn on the left arm and on the head by Jewish men during morning weekday prayers

**pipel:** a young boy in the service of a *kapo* in the concentration camps

**Red Army:** the Army of the Soviet Union

**Rebbe:** rabbi, usually refers to a Hasidic rabbi

**Rosh Hashanah:** the festival of the New Year in Judaism. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and the eight days in between are special days of penitence.

S–T

**Shavuot:** a Jewish holiday in commemoration of the revelation of the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai

**Shekhinah:** a visible manifestation of the divine presence as described in Jewish theology

**SS:** German; abbreviation for *Schutzstaffel* (literally, protection squads.) A paramilitary formation of the Nazi Party initially created to serve as bodyguard to Hitler and other Nazi leaders. It later took charge of domestic and foreign intelligence, the German police and the central security apparatus, the concentration camps and the systematic mass murder of Jews and other victims.

**synagogue:** in Judaism, a house of worship and learning

**Talmud:** collections of rabbinic commentary on biblical texts that form, with the Torah, the foundation for the religious laws of Judaism

**Temple:** the central place of worship for the Israelites. The first Temple was built in Jerusalem by King Solomon and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. (See [Babylonian captivity](#)) Seventy years later, after the Jews returned to Jerusalem, the Second Temple was built on the same site. This Second Temple was significantly enlarged and expanded during the First Century B.C.E.; the Romans destroyed it in 70 C.E.

**tommy gun:** submachine gun

**Transylvania:** a historical region of western Romania bounded by the Transylvanian Alps and the Carpathian Mountains. Part of Hungary from 1867 to 1918, it became part of Romania after World War I. The province was divided between Romania and Hungary in 1940, with northern Transylvania going to Hungary. Northern Transylvania was restored to Romania after World War II.

**truncheons:** a short stick or club carried by police

U–Z

**yellow star:** a badge featuring the Star of David (a symbol of Judaism) used by the Nazis during the Holocaust as a method of identifying Jews in Germany and in some areas occupied by the Germans

**Yom Kippur:** a Jewish holy day marked by fasting and prayer for the atonement of sins

**Zionism:** a Jewish movement that arose in the late 19th century in response to growing anti-Semitism and European nationalism. One of its primary aims was to re-establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

**Zohar:** Hebrew meaning "splendor, radiance;" one of the major works of the Kabbalah.