

= Yad Kennedy =

Yad Kennedy (Hebrew : יָד יֵהוּדָה) , located in the Mateh Yehuda Region near Jerusalem , Israel , is a memorial to John F. Kennedy , the 35th President of the United States , who was assassinated in Dallas , Texas in 1963 . The 60 @-@ foot high (18 m) memorial is shaped like the stump of a felled tree , symbolizing a life cut short . Inside is a bronze relief of Kennedy , with an eternal flame burning in the center . It is encircled by 51 concrete columns , one for each of the 50 states in the United States plus one for Washington , D.C. , that nation 's capital . The emblems of the states (and of the District of Columbia) are displayed on each of the columns , and the columns are separated by slim panels of glass . The monument measures approximately 250 feet (76 m) in circumference around its base , and there is space within the memorial for approximately 100 visitors at a time . The monument was built in 1966 with funds donated by American Jewish communities .

Yad Kennedy and its adjoining picnic grounds are part of the John F. Kennedy Peace Forest .

= = Name = =

The Hebrew word yad , which is used for a number of memorials in Israel (including the well @-@ known Holocaust memorial museum Yad Vashem) , comes from the Book of Isaiah , chapter 56 , verse 5 : " And to them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name (yad vashem) . "

= = Location = =

The site is located 7 miles (11 km) from downtown Jerusalem , in the same general direction as Hadassah Medical Center , on top of the highest of the Jerusalem hills , at an elevation of 825 metres (2 @, @ 707 ft) . The site overlooks what was at the time of the dedication the Jordanian village of Bittar (now a part of Israel 's West Bank) , the historic site of Betar , famous as the last stronghold of the Jewish revolt led by Simon Bar Kochba against Roman forces in 132 ? 135 CE . The view from the parking lot has been described in the Frommer 's travel guide as " breathtaking ? a never @-@ ending succession of mountains and valleys . " On a clear day , the Mediterranean Sea can be seen in the direction of Tel Aviv , 40 miles (64 km) away . The memorial can be reached by following the winding mountain roads past Ora and Aminadav . It is approximately 45 minutes by foot from the nearest main road , where the closest Jerusalem city bus is # 20 , although special tour buses are normally utilized for group visits .

The monument and adjoining picnic grounds are part of the John F. Kennedy Peace Forest . The area designated as the JFK Peace Forest is part of the larger " Aminadav Forest " , a 7 @, @ 000 @-@ dunam forest in Ein Kerem .

= = History = =

Max Bressler of Chicago , Illinois , then president of the American Jewish National Fund , came up with the proposal for the memorial in 1964 . Bressler , for whom the Jerusalem neighborhood of Kiryat Menachem is named , had hoped to lead an American delegation to the dedication ceremony , but he died in 1966 .

= = = Fundraising = = =

On 13 January 1964 , former Pennsylvania Governor George M. Leader announced plans for the memorial , stating that he would serve as the General Chair of a State committee to raise funds . He stated that similar committees would be set up in each State , as well as some additional committees in countries overseas . On 22 November 1964 , the first anniversary of the assassination , the Jewish National Fund sponsored meetings in major Jewish communities

throughout the United States . The meetings were described as tributes for the fallen President as well as symbolic dedication ceremonies for the planned memorial .

American communities pledged to fund the planting of trees in the forest in addition to funds for the memorial . For example , in July 1965 , the community of Los Angeles , California pledged to have 100 @, @ 000 trees planted as a result of a banquet sponsored by JNF attended by more than 1000 government , union , and management leaders .

= = = Dedication = = =

Nearly 2000 people , including many official guests representing the Israeli and United States governments , came to witness the dedication , along with hundreds of tourists , American students , and Israelis .

An Israeli children 's band played Hatikva , the Israeli national anthem , along with the U.S. anthem , the Star Spangled Banner . The New York Times reported that the children " tried valiantly " to play the U.S. song , playing very slowly , but then many strong voices from among the crowd helped out until the music " swept the audience . "

Among the guests at the 4 July 1966 dedication was U.S. Chief Justice Earl Warren , who had chaired the commission tasked with investigating the 1963 assassination . Among other guests were Levi Eshkol , Prime Minister of Israel , Teddy Kollek , the mayor of Jerusalem , and Walworth Barbour , the United States Ambassador to Israel .

Chief Justice Warren , who was reported to be so enthusiastic about the memorial after actually seeing it for the first time that he rewrote his remarks , noted :

" We choose to do this on the American Independence Day but also in honor of the independence of Israel and other free nations . We are all confronted here by history because this is the birthplace of the world 's three religions on which our own civilization is based and which contributed the all @-@ important principle that all people are God 's children and entitled to live in peace . "

Warren noted that Washington , D.C. had many memorials , but that this area , with the forest as a " living memorial , " would have " greatly pleased " Kennedy for two reasons . First , Kennedy himself had spoken of the importance of planting trees in Israel , when he had addressed a 1958 Jewish National Fund meeting while serving as a junior Senator from Massachusetts , saying , " What work could be more heartwarming or more enduring than the great forest at Jerusalem . Your children and grandchildren when they visit Israel will find your monument " . Second , Warren recalled that Kennedy had visited Israel twice , the first time in 1939 when it was still part of the British Mandate , and the second time in 1951 . Speaking in 1951 of the differences between the people he witnessed during those two visits , he said that " Perhaps the greatest change of all I found in the hearts and minds of the people , For unlike the discouraged settlers of 1939 they looked to the future with hope . I found a revival of an ancient spirit " . Warren concluded his remarks by saying he would use the same word that President Kennedy would have used : " Shalom . "

Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol spoke as well , noting that Kennedy 's memory would be kept alive by this memorial " not only as a friend of Israel but also as a symbol of the lofty ideals of his country and of all humanity , " dedicating the memorial to " the man who opened new frontiers of international relations and human friendships . "

In remarks offered by the American ambassador to Israel , Walworth Barbour , he noted that " A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces but also by the men it honors . In thus honoring and remembering the late President Kennedy , the men and women of the Jewish National Fund honor themselves--beyond and above the glory they have already earned in their work for Israel . "

Jacob Tsur , world president of the Jewish National Fund , praised the memorial as well , " conceived in the shape of a mighty trunk of a fallen tree , among the thousands of saplings which will grow one day into a great forest . "

= = Design = =

Yad Kennedy was designed by the Brazilian @-@ born Israeli architect David Resnick , who later

won the 1995 Israel Prize in architecture , and the Ukrainian @-@ born Israeli sculptor Dov Feigin . Feigin created the bust of Kennedy along with a memorial wall that includes excerpts from a number of Kennedy 's speeches . Resnick said that " the entire complex is intended to symbolize the vigor of a great man whose life was tragically ended in mid @-@ growth by assassination " .

Resnick was awarded the contract to design the memorial after a nationwide competition . His initial vision for the memorial was a " free form " but generally circular shape , set within a reflecting pool . However , because money was being raised for the memorial by groups in all 50 states in the U.S. , as well as groups in Washington , D.C. , a vision of columns for each of those locations ultimately helped him come up with the concept of a tree trunk , linked to the idea that Kennedy 's life had been cut down like a tree that is felled in its prime . The courtyard below the memorial includes a number of plaques acknowledging contributions by individuals and groups .

In addition to the Kennedy relief and eternal flame , papers and photographs relating to the subject of Israel @-@ United States relations until the time of Kennedy 's assassination are kept in a small library .

In 1974 , a picnic site was added on the grounds of the memorial , open to visitors . The JNF announced that the site would " include rustic benches and tables , water facilities and shaded eating areas , " and would be " close to the impressive stone and metal memorial ? but far enough away not to pollute the area . "

= = Kennedy Peace Forest = =

The Kennedy Peace Forest was dedicated before the memorial , with official dedication ceremonies taking place on 22 November 1964 , on the first anniversary of Kennedy 's assassination .

In June 1966 Jewish National Fund officials announced that 1 @.@ 5 million trees had already been planted in the forest in preparation for the memorial 's planned 4 July dedication ceremonies . The announcement noted that another 2 million trees had been planted in the adjoining " United States Freedom Forest , " with a goal of planting 5 @.@ 5 million trees in the two forests , as a number equal to the Jewish population of the United States . More than three million dollars in donations had been received at that point for the Kennedy Forest , from more than 100 @,@ 000 donors .

In June 1968 , the JNF announced it would plant 500 @,@ 000 trees in the Kennedy Forest in memory of John F. Kennedy 's brother , Robert F. Kennedy , assassinated on 6 June of that year . In 1999 , JNF announced that trees would also be planted in memory of John F. Kennedy , Jr . , his wife Carolyn Bessette @-@ Kennedy , and sister @-@ in @-@ law Lauren Bessette , all victims of a 16 July 1999 plane crash in the ocean off Martha 's Vineyard , Massachusetts .

In April 1989 a forest fire (possibly the result of arson) destroyed approximately 8 acres (3 @.@ 2 ha) and 3000 trees in the forest .

= = Special events = =

Among the many special events that have taken place at the memorial was a visit by a number of officers and crew members from the United States aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy (CV67) , named in honor of the same U.S. President memorialized by this monument , during a 1997 port visit to Haifa .

= = = Tree planting = = =

A VIP Kennedy Memorial tree planting center is included on the grounds of the memorial , where many distinguished visitors from other countries have planted trees . In May 1978 Jacqueline Kennedy , widow of the president , visited the memorial and planted a tree in the forest . Other members of the Kennedy family who have visited the memorial and planted trees include U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy (JFK 's brother) , on 11 December 1986 ; Joan Kennedy (Teddy Kennedy 's first wife) , on 24 January 1983 ; and Robert F. Kennedy , Jr. and his sister Kathleen Kennedy

Townsend (JFK 's nephew and niece ; children of Robert F. Kennedy) , on 1 January 1987 . A special " Kennedy Family Planting Circle " was established by the Jewish National Fund . In 2001 Kennedy 's daughter Kathleen Kennedy Townsend , then Lieutenant Governor of Maryland , visited Yad Kennedy during her tour of Israel with her husband and three of her four daughters .

Visiting American military personnel are among those who plant trees at the memorial because of its remembrance of an American president . Among those who have planted trees at the site are former Chiefs of Chaplains of the United States Army , Navy , and Air Force .

Israeli groups also take part in the tree planting tradition , especially on the Jewish holiday of Tu Bishvat , an occasion linked to trees . On some occasions as many as 4000 Israeli school children have come to the Kennedy Peace Forest to plant trees on that holiday .

In addition to individual or group tree plantings , there have been special occasions when smaller " forests " have been dedicated within the larger John F. Kennedy Peace Forest . For example , as early as January 1966 , even before the dedication of the memorial , a forest was planted in honor of Ambassador Avraham Harman , Israel 's ambassador to the United States . The " Avraham Harman Forest " was contributed by Bnai Zion , a pro @-@ Israel " fraternal group " in the U.S. , and Golda Meir , newly retired from her post as Israel 's Prime Minister , was one of the participants in the dedication ceremony .

Other specially designated areas within the larger John F. Kennedy Peace Forest include a " woodland " set up to memorialize the victims of the 1972 Lydda airport (now named Ben Gurion International Airport) terrorist attack .

= = Gallery = =