

“In remembrance”: A comparative study of the *Portzei ha-derech* and *Bika* monuments as two Israeli sites of memory

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One of the first national monuments to be built by the Families and Commemoration department in Israel's Ministry of Defense was the memorial to *Portzei ha-derech*, located some fifteen kilometers west of Jerusalem, on the northern side of the highway to Tel Aviv. Designed by the sculptress Naomi Henrik, it was erected in 1967. The story behind this memorial is also one of the most fascinating of all Israeli monuments and has much to teach about acts of commemoration and preserving a sense of continuity. For purposes of comparison, the *Portzei ha-derech* memorial will be considered alongside a second monument that has a very different story, location and form: the *Bika* monument, erected in 1972 at the initiative of Rehavam Ze'evi and sculpted by Yigal Tumerkin. My discussion will compare these two memorial sites from various aspects, with an eye to architecture components, materials, location, connection to the historical narrative they are meant to commemorate and, finally, the extent to which each of them actually succeeds in serving as a site of memory.

In recent decades a great deal of attention has been paid to commemoration and figures of memory worldwide, and in Israeli scholarship in particular. In a country learned in battle and in mourning, new sorrows can easily dull the memory of past ones. Creating a culture of memory as part of Israeli collective identity is thus a matter of crucial importance. The goal of this paper is not to innovate but to evaluate, with the aid of contemporary research on memory spaces and the construction of national memory, the *Portzei ha-derech* monument and its success in the project of historical commemoration. This study combines perspectives drawn from study of history, art, and philosophy to consider some essential aspects of Israeli's evolving culture of historical memory.