

Dear Friends,

As I was saying . . . I understand that the complete text of my remarks delivered on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur are now available online. Unfortunately, matters have gotten worse on the immigration front as the Administration has turned to fear and cruelty to drive out legal, as well as illegal, immigrants. Days after Yom Kippur, the Department of Homeland Security proposed a rule that would allow it to deny green cards and visas to immigrants here legally who have used public health and nutrition assistance, including Medicaid and food stamps. In addition, reports continue about hundreds of undocumented migrant children being moved from shelters to tent cities in the dead of night for periods as long as sixty days. The transfer is to make room for more than 13,000 detained migrant children, the largest population ever, more than fivefold in number since last year. There are no required educational services in these tent cities, and accessibility to legal services is significantly curtailed. In addition to proceeding with our synagogue's efforts to resettle a family from El Salvador about which I spoke on Yom Kippur, we will join congregations throughout the United States in observing Refugee Shabbat at services on Friday evening, October 20. The service will feature teachings from Jewish tradition regarding refugees, and will include a testimony from Jonah Hirshwerk, one of our teens, who will talk about his summer experience working with immigrants this past summer.

There were many other parts of my address that I would have liked to have spoken about more fully – the Israelis who have chosen to live in Berlin, for example. These Israelis were initially attracted to the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the city and by the many business opportunities to be had there. My guide called Berlin “the Brooklyn of Europe,” The Israeli presence inspired many neighborhoods and advanced gentrification so much so that they, the Israelis, have, in some cases, become the victims of their own success. Being forced out of the places they helped develop by rising rents, they are leaving Berlin. And where are they going? Irony of ironies – to Warsaw, Poland! Talk about ‘from the frying pan into the fire.’

Even more counter-intuitive is the embrace of Germany's far right by a bloc of Jews. Fueled by a spike in the number of anti-Semitic incidents with some of the attacks coming from Muslim immigrants, these Jews have thrown their lot in with the Alternative for Germany (the AfD), members of which have questioned Germany's culpability in World War II and the Holocaust. A similar move has been noted in France, where the far-right National Front party has begun to attract Jews. And so the strange history of Jews in Germany and in France continues to be written.

We will continue on to witness these developments in the year ahead. May it be a better year for us all. Warmly, Lee