BERLIN AND NEW YORK: MOMUMENTS AND THEIR MEANINGS

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I had traveled to Berlin for the art. My older daughter, Sara, told me that Germany's capital had replaced Paris as Europe's center for contemporary art, indeed, that the city had become the crossroads of Europe for art and for music, for theater, and for food, too. She suggested that I visit the Boros Foundation for the best perspective on the most radical edge of Berlin's art scene. The Foundation's galleries are housed in a bunker that was built by the Nazis in 1943 as a possible shelter for up to 3,000 people. This concrete structure stands five stories high, has 120 rooms, and occupies a full city block in the heart of Berlin. The Nazis had planned to clad the building in marble after their victory and to refurbish its interior as a residence for their Fuhrur, but with Germany's defeat, the Red Army turned the bunker into a prisoner-of-war camp in the spring of '45. In the 50's, the building was used to store textiles and produce. Abandoned for the next three decades, in 1992 it became the home to Gabba, a hardcore techno sex club, which closed a few years later after a series of raids by Berlin's vice squad.

In 2003, Christian Boros bought the building to display a small portion of his extensive art collection, and as a home for his wife and son. Born in Poland, Boros had immigrated to West Germany to escape communism. He became interested in the intersection of economics and culture while at the Bergischen University in Wuppertal, which led him to found his own communications and advertising agency.

His success allowed him to collect the work of international artists who, in his words, "challenge me, question my convictions, and show me something new." The art that I viewed certainly did that for me, and more. If the afore-mentioned club, Gabba, with its raves and sex parties, had been "the hardest club in the world," as it advertised itself to be, then the paintings, sculptures, and installations in Boros's collection can be seen as its artistic equivalent. Most of the work on display is as brutalist in its nature as the concrete walls that contain it.

I left the building feeling aesthetically ungratified, but unexpectedly triumphant. Here is a structure that was initially built by the Nazis to protect their own with the expectation that at the war's end it would serve as a monument to their victory and a home for the man who led them to it. Now instead, the bunker, both in its still unadorned raw form and in its history, stands as a symbol of their defeat. A prison to house German soldiers, a hardcore sex club, and now with gallery after gallery of avant-garde art that would certainly have been classified as degenerate by the Brown Shirts, art collected by a former Polish national who had become naturalized as a citizen of Germany, the building, its contents and its owner is a testament against all that German National Socialism had stood for.

'Victory is ours!' I wanted to shout. Then kneeling outside the exit to tie my shoelace, I saw a small brass plaque embedded in the walkway, which read: "*Hier wohnte /* Here lived Ella Karma, *Geborn /* Born Friedlander, 1886. *Deportiert /* Deported: Auschwitz, 15 July 1944. *Befreit /* Liberated. *Tot /* Died, 26 March 1945."

My first *Stolperstein.* I first heard about the *Stolpersteine* – literally, "stumbling stones" – from synagogue members John and Judy Miodownik after their visit to Berlin several years ago. A *Stolperstein* is a ten by ten centimeter square concrete cube that bears a brass plate with the name and dates of a single person who fell victim to Nazi terror – individuals who were deported or fled, individuals who died or survived. The German artist, Gunter Demnig, initiated the *Stolperstein* project in 1992. He set his *Stolpersteine* in the sidewalk outside the last known residence or work place of the person commemorated. Demnig intended that people would trip over these stumbling stones, not physically but viscerally. He wanted the heart to stumble, to miss a beat with the realization that none of the 13,000,000 who perished at the hands of the Nazis, nor the many millions of others whose lives were overturned by them were anonymous, that each one of them had a name and an address, a date of birth and if not a date of death then of the place of their death, usually one of six extermination camps. Demnig wanted to make each one of the *Stolperstein* commemorees real, and their life and fate personal for us, the stumblers.

"Here lived Ella Karma, born Friedlander, 1886. Deported to Auschwitz, 15 July 1944. Liberated. Died, 26 March 1945." A patch of history in ten words, three dates, written in eight lines. A patch of history, but not a fragment. Our Sages observed that only one man and one woman were created at the beginning to teach that each of us is a whole world in ourselves. So it was with Ella Karma. Her birth in 1886 was but a point along the continuum of the history of many centuries of Jewish life in Eastern

Europe and in Germany. Did Ella's family come to Germany following the partitions of Poland and Lithuania in the late 1700's, or, as their surname suggests, had they been residents of any of the Friedland lands in Prussia and Silesia perhaps for centuries before? At the time of Ella's birth, Berlin was a center of Jewish vitality and growth. It was home to a dozen synagogues, numerous Jewish newspapers and periodicals, and a variety of Jewish communal institutions and organizations. The city was alive with religious innovations and emerging political ideologies. Did Ella's family subscribe to the ritual reforms of Berlin's radical rabbis, or were they staunchly Orthodox in their Jewish observance? Were the Friedlanders attracted to the nascent Zionist movement, or had they long before assimilated into the German cultural milieu of the previous generation's salon Jewesses who considered their Judaism to be a stain on their identities as proud Germans?

When did Ella come to realize the growing threat of anti-Semitism? Was it in 1918 at the war's end with the success of right wing politicians who identified the Jews as principally responsible for Germany's defeat and for the death of more than a million-and-a-half of the Fatherland's soldiers? Did she follow Hitler's rise to power in the early twenties with his promise that "the annihilation of the Jews will be my first and foremost task." The location of her *Stolperstein* indicates that she might have personally witnessed the events on the eve of January 30, 1933. Living only one kilometer southeast of the Brandenburg Gate, she must have seen the glow from the torch-lit procession of thousands of brown shirted storm troopers and SS members as they marched through the gate and down Wilhelmstrasse to celebrate Hitler's

appointment as chancellor. Why did she remain in Berlin, in Germany, as her life became increasingly circumscribed socially and then legally restricted under the Nuremberg Laws in 1935? Three years later, wherever she found herself on Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass and of fire, Ella was not a Jew alone. On November 9, 1938, there were 80,000 Jews still resident in Berlin. Why had they stayed? Was it their lack of choice, or their reluctance to leave the country that had been their home for so many generations, or was it their refusal to believe that their fellow Germans would become so debased as to devise *die Endloesung der Judenfrage,* the Final Solution to the Jewish Question that would be formulated at Wannsee less than two years later?

"Deported: 15 July 1944, Auschwitz." The systematic removal of Jews from 1941 to 1943 had left Berlin's Jewish population depleted by more than ninety-five percent. At the time of Ella's deportation in the summer of '44, the city was all but *Judenrein* with fewer than 9,000 Jews, all of whom were invisible and in mortal peril. How had Ella spent those terrible years? Was she hidden in place, or did she live publically, hiding within herself? Living under constant threat, what sustained her while she waited for the war's end, or for death? How and by whom was she finally discovered; had she been careless or was she betrayed? Was she defiant or submissive when she was led away? Ella arrived at Auschwitz a fifty-eight year old woman who had certainly been compromised, body and spirit, by years of terror and lack of food. So weakened and so old, how did she survive the selection process on her arrival? What

kept her from Birkenau's ovens? What willed her to live in hell for six-and-a-half months?

"*Befreit /* Liberated." On January 27, 1945, the Soviet army entered Auschwitz. They found hundreds of sick, dying and exhausted prisoners who the Germans had left behind in their hasty retreat from the camp. Among them was Ella. Did she fully grasp that she was free at last, liberated not only from Auschwitz but also from the years of confinement and fear before her deportation? Did she still have hope of being reunited with family members and friends, and of living a life in the open, or was all hope eclipsed by her guilt for having survived?

"Died: 26 March 1945." Ella had lived against all odds. She managed to stay hidden in Berlin long after the vast majority of her fellow Jews had been deported. She was sent to Auschwitz only six months before the liberation of the camp, and had somehow survived selection, and then starvation and disease, yet death came less than two months after her liberation. *Befreit /* liberated for what? For death?

Nevertheless Ella's life had meaning. Her *Stolperstein* proves it. Each stumbling stone has a sponsor who pays for its fabrication and installation. Someone remembered Ella Karma, and because of them, now I do, too, as do all of you. "Ella Karma, born Friedlander." I know nothing of my paternal grandfather Friedlander's family. He fled the ritual-bound confines of his parents' home in Albany to Philadelphia, and never looked back. He died at age thirty-nine shortly after the birth of his third child.

Any connection to other Friedlanders died with him. My paternal grandmother was a Jewish Yankee, a second generation Philadelphian, rare for the times. While my maternal grandparents were émigrés from Poland and Romania, they were the last in their families to come to America. So though my early identity as a Jew was forged in the fires of Europe's crematoria, the reality was once removed. It was borrowed from my *yeshiva* teachers – survivors all – who lived to tell their stories and the stories of their parents and grandparents, and of their siblings and children who became bone and ash. But with Ella, born Friedlander, my heart tripped, as Gunter Demnig had intended, making the Shoah all the more particular and personal.

Ella's *Stolperstein* is one of over 67,000 *Stolpersteine* that have been laid in twenty-two countries, making Gunter Demnig's project the largest decentralized memorial in the world.

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What Demnig has accomplished in miniature, others have undertaken to achieve monumentally. Berlin is a city punctuated by monuments dedicated to specific groups of people who had been targeted by the National Socialists including German resisters, homosexuals, the Santi and the Roma, and the casualties of the Nazi Euthanasia Program. None of these monuments are found behind walls or reserved for the intentional visitor. Each is situated in the midst of the city. As with the *Stolpersteine*, you may well stumble upon them when leaving a gallery or a concert,

or taking a stroll in a park, or walking across a plaza. You encounter these memorials in the same way you might have encountered the victims they commemorate who were part of the human landscape of Berlin before the Nazi terror.

The largest of these monumental memorials is Peter Eisenman's "Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe." It is also the most problematic of the monuments to my mind, perhaps because it is for me the most personal. The almost five acre site, a rolling field, is located close to the Reichstag building and a stone's throw from the Brandenburg Gate within what was the "death zone" of the Berlin Wall, which divided the city between 1961 and 1989. Previously, during the war, the area was the administrative center of the Third Reich. 2711 slabs, or steles, cover the site, each stele almost eight feet long and a little less than three feet wide, and ranging in height from eight inches to fifteen-and-a-half feet. The slabs are arranged in rows – fifty-four going north-south, and eighty-seven facing east-west, all at right angles but set slightly askew.

Eisenman intended visitors to enter his installation from off Berlin's central park, the Tiergarten. There is no signage there, nothing to indicate who or what is to be remembered. The vast space is also void of names and iconography. There are only the steles that symbolize what – tombstones, cattle cars, barracks, destroyed communities? Eisenman left it to the viewer to interpret them. He wanted the experience to be personal, equivocal, and even perplexing. It was only at the insistence of city officials that an information center was added at the installation's

far end, which includes a timeline of the history of the Final Solution, several rooms dedicated to personal aspects of the Shoah, and a listing of 3,000,000 names. Eisenman balked at the addition because he wanted his memorial to stand on its own without words or graphics for guidance. He wanted it to be abstract and ambiguous, even disassociating its title, "Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe" from the 'Holocaust' brand.

But it is its very abstraction and ambiguity that makes Eisenman's monument so problematic. Because it depends completely on the 'eye of the beholder,' in itself it fails to strike at the heart of the uninformed. Worse, it has led to unintentional trivialization if not desecration by the unaware. There have been many instances on a variety of social media platforms of mostly millennials posting smiling selfies with the memorial as a backdrop, or of photos of individuals in yoga positions atop a stele, or videos of people jumping from stele to stele, or dancing or sun bathing or juggling on the memorial's stone slabs. During the Pokémon GO craze in the summer of 2016, Eisenman's memorial became a place where one might find and capture cute Pokémon creatures.

Eisenman intended that his monument, the largest of its kind in the world, would stand as witness to the Six Million murdered. But even if he had proportionally erected more than six million slabs on more than 10,000 acres – almost sixteen square miles – would it have had the same heart-stopping resonance as a single *Stolperstein*? I cannot begin to comprehend the annihilation of six million Jews, almost half of the

Jewish population of the world at the time, but I can suffer and mourn the loss of one – Ella Karma, born Friedlander.

In the end, the value of any memorial is not how the heart responds, or even what the mind perceives; the measure must be in how it affects the behavior of the viewer. Did the names of the 2911 people killed at the World Trade Center seventeen years ago tomorrow, each name stencil-cut into the parapets surrounding the plaza's two memorial pools, prevent America's invasion of Iraq? Did the 58,318 names of service members "declared dead" and "missing in action" inscribed on the wall of Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial stop America from sending more than two-and-a-half-million troops into Afghanistan after the fall of the Towers? With regard to Peter Eisenman's monument, has his memorial to the Murdered Jews informed the attitude of Berlin's residents to the Jews living in the city today? Does its message extend beyond the city's limit? And are the Jews of Germany, of Europe safer for it?

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170,000 Jews were living in Berlin in January 1933 when Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany. About half of them had left the city by Kristallnacht in November of '38. Six months after the Allies accepted Germany's surrender in May of '45, Berlin's Jews numbered 4270, less than half of whom had managed to live out the war hiding in place, the others death camp returnees. Today there are 10,000 Jews in Berlin, eighty-five percent of them émigrés from the countries of the former Soviet

Union, and five percent divided between Jews from other Western European nations, and Israelis. Only ten percent, about a thousand Jews in all, have any pre-war tie to the city.

The Neue (or New) Synagogue, built between 1859 and 1866, stands both as a monument to the history of Berlin's Jewish community of the Enlightenment period, and as a metaphor for the moribund state of the city's contemporary Jewish community. The majority of the mid-nineteenth century Jews of Berlin aspired to be accepted as equals in German society. Progressive rabbis did their part to advance their integration by promoting reforms using the practices of the Protestant Church for their template. They aimed to replace the chaos and cacophony of traditional synagogues with the order, beauty, dignity and refinement of the Lutherans. To this end, the rabbi, stripped of *yarmulke* and *tallis*, was garbed in a clerical robe and collar, and delivered his sermons in German. The cantor, abandoning the Yiddish inflected Hebrew of the Ashkenazim for the clipped pronunciation of the Sepharadim, was accompanied by a mixed choir and organ. Men and women, dressed in their Sunday best, sat together with their children in family pews. Most notably, lamentations for the loss of the ancient Temple, and prayers for a return to Zion were eliminated lest they call into question the loyalty of the Jews to the pre-nascent German state.

Consistent with the social and liturgical innovations of the congregation, the style of the synagogue building reflected a break with tradition as well. Stunningly, the congregation commissioned a Moorish revivalist design featuring a facade that was

topped by a central gilded ribbed dome flanked by two smaller pavilion-like domes, which are grouped to resemble a Sephardi Torah scroll. The Golden Age of Spain had been a time of extraordinary achievement by diaspora Jews in the fields of philosophy, the sciences, and the arts, and marked a period of centuries of pacific co-existence with their host society. In referencing this Golden Age architecturally, the members of the Neue Synagogue underscored their belief that 1850's Germany would provide them with the same fertile soil for their creativity and growth as Spain had. By disassociating themselves from the dress, manners, language, practices, ideologies and architecture of their traditional co-religionists, these new Jews indicated to their fellow Germans that they were eager and ready to leave their ghetto existence and embrace all that Germany had to offer.

But while the Jews in Spain flourished for more than 700 years before their deportation by order of the Inquisition in 1492, the hopes for a similar era of tolerance and accomplishment for German Jews was aborted almost immediately after its conception. Hitler's rise to power and the restrictions of the Nuremberg Laws was the impetus for the exodus of 80,000 Jews from Berlin prior to Kristallnacht in 1938. On that terrible night of 'broken glass,' the Neue Synagogue was ransacked, its Torah scrolls were desecrated, and its furniture was smashed and then set on fire. It was saved from the fate of 1400 other synagogues and stiebels that were destroyed throughout Germany by a local police lieutenant who, unaware of the Nazi-sponsored pogrom, ordered the attacking mob to disperse to allow a fire brigade access to extinguish the flames. The congregation repaired the building as best they could, well

enough to use it for worship and for concerts and lectures for the next six-and-a-half years until the Nazis forced them to close it in the spring of 1940. Ironically, what a German police lieutenant had saved was destroyed by Allied bombing during the Battle of Berlin, the battle that ended the war. While the building façade with its domes remained albeit damaged, the rest of the building, including its magnificent sanctuary, the largest in Western Europe, was all but rubble, a macabre maquette of Berlin's post-war devastated Jewish community.

The destitute Jews of East Berlin became the proprietors of the synagogue in 1958. Their impoverishment forced them to demolish the ruined rear sections of the building including the vast sanctuary, leaving only the wall facing the street intact. Lack of funds also compelled them to raze the damaged central dome, which had crowned the building's glory. It was only with the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the repatriation of the building to the West thirty years later that any reconstruction could be considered. Today the Neue Synagogue is a synagogue in name only. The building is home to the "Centrum Judaicum," an institution dedicated to Jewish memory. Torah and Megillah scrolls and ritual objects that were recovered in the course of the building's restoration, are unused artifacts exhibited in glass vitrines. The main prayer hall, which had accommodated 3200 worshippers, was not restored. Sadly, there was no need. Instead, what had been a women's wardrobe room with a seating capacity of fifty was converted into the community's only prayer space. So this building, which embodied in bricks and domes the dreams of grandeur of a new Jewish Golden Age in Germany, is but a shell of its former glory. The same could be

said about the 10,000 Jews of Berlin, a community that is as beleaguered as it is moribund.

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A few days before my visit to Berlin, Adam Armoush was attacked in a trendy neighborhood of the city because he was wearing a kippa. Ironically, the twenty-one-year old Armoush is a non-Jewish Arab Israeli who had donned the kippa as an "experiment," as he put it, refusing to believe a friend's assertion that wearing a kippa in Germany could be dangerous. Armoush was beaten with a belt as his perpetrator shouted "Yehudi!" Arabic for 'Jew.' Chancellor Angela Merkel was quick to condemn the incident, as were other government officials from across the political spectrum. A day before my departure, Berlin's mayor, Michael Muller, addressed a rally of hundreds of people all wearing kippot, people of all faiths, and from political parties ranging from the far right to the far left who had gathered in front of the city's Jewish Center in an act of solidarity with the Jews of Berlin. "Today the kippa is a symbol of the Berlin we would like to have," the mayor told the crowd. "It is," he proclaimed, "a symbol of tolerance."

No less of a response could have been expected from the leaders of a country that has spent seventy years confronting its Holocaust past. "It is our responsibility to protect Jewish life here," Germany's Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, declared in a tweet. "Jews must never again feel threatened here." Chancellor Merkel, who, just a week before

the attack, had appointed a commissioner on anti-Semitism, vowed that her government would continue to fight "relentlessly and with resolve."

Yet, despite the assurances from government officials and even in the afterglow of the solidarity demonstration, Jewish community leaders worried that the pronouncements and rallies, however sincere and heartening, could not address the subtle and sometimes virulent anti-Jewish sentiments and actions that Jews experience daily. This was reflected in the immediate response to the attack by Josef Schuster, the head of Germany's Central Council of Jews, the country's largest Jewish umbrella organization, who, taking a practical approach to the situation, advised Jewish men to wear a baseball cap to cover their heads to make them less conspicuous when they walk about. As I passed the city's Jewish day-school at dismissal time on my visit, I remarked to my guide how indistinguishable the kids were from high school students on Long Island's North Shore. The boys carried backpacks and had ear-buds, but were without the kippot and tsitsiyot that identify Hebrew Academy and Ramaz boys. My guide explained that they are from ritually non-observant families, most of them the children of émigrés from the former Soviet Union whose parents know little about Judaism, nor do they think it particularly important to their lives; but they send their children to the Jewish school because they consider it unsafe for them to attend public school. Indeed, incidents of anti-Semitic bullying have been reported in schools across the country. Children thoughtlessly shout "Jew" as an insult in schoolyards, and reference negative Jewish stereotypes in their common discourse.

[The same anti-Semitic tropes have found their way into other aspects of German youth culture. A few days before the Armoush attack, coincidently, on Yom HaShoah, gangsta rappers Farid Bang and Kollegah were awarded the prestigious Echo for an album that included lyrics trivializing the Holocaust. Many previous winners returned their Echos in protest. The sponsoring agency for the Echo announced that it was cancelling the prize altogether because the Echo's image had been so badly damaged by the incident. Though Bang and Kollegah apologized, their record label, BMG, dropped them. But condemnation was late in coming, and was not unequivocal when it came. Kollegah had promoted conspiracy theories in past songs and videos, that "the world is in control of evil, and the evil is marked as Jewish," for example. While the country's recording industry association had criticized the lyrics, it defended its choice of awarding the Echo in the name of artistic freedom. It noted, too, that nominations are based on billboard rankings, not on artistic quality. It is this very popularity that underscores the most troubling aspect of this matter. German rappers have a huge fan base of millions of impressionable children and teenagers who, generations removed from the horrors of the Final Solution, have become inured to the devastation of the Holocaust and to the virulence engendered by anti-Semitic tropes.]

Some Germans took a measure of comfort when Armoush's attacker was identified as a nineteen-year-old Syrian asylum-seeker. But while more than a million immigrants and refugees have entered Germany in the past two years, many of them from the

Middle East, police statistics indicate that ninety-percent of the 1453 anti-Semitic crimes reported in 2017 were perpetrated by members of Germany's far right or neo-Nazi groups. The expected desertion of voters from the Christian-democratic conservative party, the CSU, for the right wing Alternative for Germany party in Bavaria is evidence that the marginalizing of foreign elements, which includes Jews, has been translated politically. Earlier this year, the CSU legally mandated the display of crosses at the entrance to all public buildings in Bavaria, yet the party is seen as not German enough by the voters who decry Chancellor Merkel's commitment to open the borders to Syrian refugees. More disconcerting was the mob protest in Chemnitz in Saxony following a knife attack by two other Syrian asylum-seekers. Waving German flags and flashing Nazi salutes, the rampaging mob made its way through the streets chasing after dark-skinned bystanders as police officers, vastly outnumbered, were too afraid to intervene. Chemnitz has a history of neo-Nazi protests, usually drawing a few hundred demonstrators from the fringes of society, with far larger numbers of counter-demonstrators. This, however, was the largest rally of its kind in post-war Germany. The mob was 8000 strong with several hundred identifiable neo-Nazis in the lead. In the face of the newly assertive far right, Chemnitz has thus become a test of Germany's democracy.

In their rampage, did any of the the Chemnitz rally participants stumble upon any of the 256 *Stolpersteine* that dot the city's sidewalks, I wonder? What is clear is that the shadows cast by the steles in Peter Eisenman's Berlin memorial to the gratuitous slaughter of millions have not reached 165 miles north to Chemnitz.

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We Americans have also failed to embrace the legacy memorialized in our monuments. With the present Administration, I think particularly of the monuments in our nation's capital in tribute to our presidents Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln, each of whom advanced the ideals of our democracy; and given the Administration's policies regarding immigrants and refugees, I think, too, of the Statue of Liberty, which welcomed more than twelve-million immigrants in the course of Ellis Island's sixty-year-long history, more than three-million of whom were Jews. They were our grandparents, our great-grandparents, and our great-great-grandparents who came to America's shores because (to paraphrase the poet, Warson Shire), home had become "the mouth of a shark," because home 'wouldn't let them stay,' because they found 'water safer than land.' They came, too, because for them America was the Goldene Medina, the Golden Land, whose streets, if not paved with gold, were pathways to opportunities unimaginable in the shtetls of Eastern Europe or in the cities to the west.

They came and they thrived because America is America, and because Jews know how to do exile very well. We've had a lot of practice. Our proto-history began when Abram left his father's home for Canaan; then famine forced him soon to leave for self-exile in Egypt for a while, a pattern that was repeated by his son and his grandson in their time. Jacob's children died in Egypt. Their offspring continued to live in exilic

servitude in that foreign land for another two centuries before they journeyed forth as a People. Free at last, the Israelites spent the first forty years of their liberation as wandering refugees. After finally coming into the Land, they lived under their own rule for only 1200 of the next 3200 years, a time that was interrupted by seventy years of Baylonian rule and exile. In 70 c.e., the Romans dispersed them throughout the world to live as resident aliens dependent on the tolerance of their host countries for the next two mellennia.

"Our People were refugees too," the banner on the outside wall of our synagogue proclaims to every passerby. But then, except for about two percent of our country's population who identify as indigenous, all Americans are descendants from someone who came from somewhere else. The paternal grandfather of our nation's president emigrated from Bavaria to the United States seeking a better life. After working as a barber in New York, he moved to the Northwest where he made a fortune operating restaurants, boarding houses and bordellos in Seattle and the Yukon Territory. The maternal great-grandfather of the president's advisor who devised and implemented the Administration's "zero tolerance policy," which separated more than 3000 children from their parents at our southwest border this summer, found sanctuary here from pogroms in Poland and forced childhood conscription into the Czar's army. He worked tirelessly to earn enough money to buy passage to America for his immediate family, saving them from Birkenau's ovens that would incinerate his extended family left behind. The policies of the president and his advisor belie their respective family histories, and disdain the post-Ellis Island legacy of generosity and

humanity, which directed America to evacuate Vietnamese after the fall of Saigon, to take in Soviet Jews in the 1980's, to airlift Kosovars fleeing genocide in the 1990's, and to admit thousands of Sudanese "Lost Boys" orphaned by war in this century. They have forgotten that their ancestors were immigrants, too. But we Jews are commanded never to forget; to the contrary, we are obligated to remember, to remember all that we suffered in the course of the centuries because we were strangers. The Bible that the attorney general used to justify obedience to civil authorities contains thirty-six references of concern and care for the stranger, far more references than there are to Shabbat or to any other matter. "Do not oppress the stranger, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt," we are commanded. It's a *mitsva,* a moral requirement, to act beneficently based on our experiences as repressed and reviled outsiders, who have known injustice, indignity and cruelty. This was the impetus for the letter, which was sent by the leaders of twenty-six Jewish organizations spanning the Jewish spectrum, to Attorney General Sessions in response to his biblical defense. "As Jews, we understand the plight of being an immigrant fleeing violence and oppression. We believe that the United States is a nation of immigrants, and how we treat the stranger reflects on the moral values and ideals of this nation."

"God has told you what is good, and what ADONAI requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness," the prophet, Micah, preached, to which a rabbinic sage added, "Where there is no justice, act justly." That's what Adam Haber did with Bob Schwartz, and with the support of many of you in our community this past year. At a

time when Syrian refugees are banned from entering the United States, Adam looked north to Canada as a place of refuge. Adam and Bob raised money enough to sponsor two families, one of which is already settled in a suburb of Toronto. In the course of this liturgical year, our congregation will continue to do what we can when, under the auspice of HIAS – the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society – we will join with Port Washington Jewish Center, Temple Beth Israel, and Community Synagogue in settling a family of seven from El Salvador in Islip. We will post further information and volunteer possibilities regarding this effort in the weeks to come.

Three families saved, three out of myriads of refugees in need. But as Ella Karma's *Stolperstein* proves, "Whoever saves the life of even one person, it is as if he saved an entire world", or as Bob Schwartz put it, "We may not be able to change the world, but we can make a difference for a couple of people." In the year ahead, let us do all that we can to help realize the invitation that appears on Lady Liberty's pedestal, an ode to America written by the American Jewish poet, Emma Lazarus. "Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, the tempest-tost to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" That lamp of liberty is now in our hands.