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Aliyah Le Berlin

A Documentary about the Next Chapter of Jewish Life in Berlin

Jewish roots in Berlin date back to the year 1295. Jews have had a tumultuous existence in Berlin, Germany, and Europe to say the least. In 1573 the Brandenburg Jews were expelled from Berlin "for all eternity" (although that did not last even a century). In 1933 the Nazi government took power the same year the first Jewish Museum opened in Berlin. Twelve years and a human apocalypse later, Berlin's Jews were almost all gone. Yet, the fascist attempt to exterminate the Jews of the world was a failure, although massive damage was inflicted on Europe's Jewish population. Some 5,000 Jews, however, stayed in Berlin after the war. Over the last 70 years, Jews have been returning to Europe. Berlin is seeing the highest return rates of any city worldwide. Surprisingly, many of these Jews are coming from Israel. *Aliyah Le Berlin* ('Making *Aliyah* to Berlin') is a documentary film about the next chapter of Jewish life in Berlin.

Berlin holds a special place in the history of Judaism. Berlin was home to Moses Mendelssohn, a Jewish thinker who forever changed the face of Judaism and the direction it took, entering the modern world. There is more to Berlin's Jewish history than just Moses Mendelssohn: Leo Baeck, Regina Jonas, David Friedländer, Daniel Itzig, Zacharias Frankel, and Abraham Geiger to name just a few. Rabbis and scholars that ended up in the United States, Canada, and even the UK often came from Berlin and brought with them the reform, liberal, and conservative forms of Jewish practice that Berlin's community and schools gave birth to and nurtured. Today, these streams of Judaism dominate modern Jewish life worldwide. Through the Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*) Jews received broad educations equal to other citizens, assimilated into local cultures, while at the same time establishing the foundations for transformation of Hebrew into a living tongue, with the help of Hebraists such as Bernhard Bär, Wolf Heidenheim, and Solomon Frensdorff. Even if some these men did not hail from Berlin *per se*, they worked in Berlin and collaborated directly with the schools and scholars of Berlin.

Twelve years of National Socialism sought to exterminate the Jews "for all eternity," but failed. I am not a scholar of Jewish history or philosophy. I am a non-Jewish filmmaker living in Berlin. I am not writing this chapter as a thesis on the Jewish Enlightenment. This chapter is dedicated to exploring and perhaps enlightening the reader about the current status of Israelis and Jews living and working in Berlin in the early twenty-first century – the subject of my documen-

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tary film *Aliyah Le Berlin*. In it, I have sought to understand what motivates young Israelis to settle in Berlin, but that is only a small part of the story. The story lies in what these immigrants do when they are here, how their lives are enriched and challenged by being in Berlin, and what they add to the culture of the place they have chosen to call their home.

One cannot use the term '*aliyah*' out-of-context without eliciting a knee-jerk response due to its value-loaded nature of the word, which is tied to the 'ascent' of Jews to Israel. Yet, to 'make *aliyah*' is not only a ritual, but also an aspiration, a spiritual act for the Jew. We use it here with both irony and purpose. Our aim is contrarian, to challenge the traditional concept of *aliyah*, and the Israeli concept of its counterpart – *yeridah* or 'to go down' or emigrate from Israel – suggesting that perchance one does not 'descend' when they leave Israel. Perhaps, this new age of Israeli and Jewish exploration in Germany has a higher purpose that has yet to be ascertained, that down the road the concept of *aliyah* will receive a something deeper, stronger, and broader meaning for the nation of Israel and its citizens.

To the layperson's eye, the reasons for anyone – Israeli, American, British, or other – to relocate to Berlin is self-evident. It is cheap, hip, and fun. The only major downside is a long, cold winter. Who would not want that triad of living easy? Berlin has sold itself as 'poor, but sexy' thanks to the branding efforts of Berlin mayor Klaus Wowereit – the product of a well-oiled propaganda machine of the highest form. The image appeals to young hipsters that seek individuality above conformity, while staunchly allowing even the anarchist and the most contrarian mind the freedom to beat their own path in this world. Berlin has strived through initiatives, business deals, co-operations, public relation advertising, and sheer might to create a very enticing atmosphere for creative individuals, entrepreneurs, parents, lovers – from the lost souls to the people ready to conquer the world.

Let's go back a bit first. Mendelssohn's Enlightenment is a fitting place to begin. I believe there are two outcomes of Mendelssohn's Jewish Enlightenment relevant to an examination of Israelis in Berlin today. The near *en masse* assimilation of Berlin's Jewish population into Germanic culture by the late nineteenth century, and the birth of modern Zionism were the growth medium for the emergence of the modern Hebrew language. This Jewish Enlightenment (a 'Jewish reformation,' in a sense) had an astounding effect on Judaism and its inclusion into European cultures. At the same time, these forces of modernity on Jewish life brought about new-found aspirations and desires to return to the Land of Israel and began the transformation of Hebrew back into the living vernacular of the Jewish people as part of a national revival. So, yes, Berlin is hip and cheap to live in for *all* free spirits, however, it is no coincidence that Israeli Jews and European

Jews are migrating to the city in record numbers. Something transformative has happened on German soil more than once. It is happening again.

The twentieth century brought hardship and near extermination of European Jewry, blind to the unprecedented assimilation and the deep affinity and sense of kinship with German culture that exemplified German Jews. We all know the history of the National Socialist era and the atrocities it produced. The legacy of the Holocaust that Nazism wrought has led two to three generations of Israelis to possess sweeping, albeit at times understandable, apprehensions and uneasiness even in mundane contacts with Germans. Take words such as *Achtung* ('attention') over public address systems, or *raus* ('get out') employed in normal discourse today; they ring very differently in an Israeli ear than an American or Spaniard ear. Yet, now, three generations after the close of the Nazi era, the grandchildren of men and women who lived through the horrors of the Holocaust are returning to a very place where such atrocities originated and were, at times, carried out.

It is important not to forget the estimated 5,000 German Jews who remained in Berlin at the close of the war. They were a hidden minority, quietly going about life, worshipping in rundown synagogues, remaining out of the public's view, yet, maintaining the last grasp on Berlin's Jewish heritage. Yet, this small, albeit important community provided a foundation for the expanding of Jewish life in Berlin today. Without this community's efforts to maintain synagogues, traditions, and a Berlin Jewish identity, might have been lost forever.

Israelis have been coming to Berlin since the 1950s. This is not something new. The reasons for this influx have always been as varied as the people coming here. There were many waves of Israelis, decade-by-decade. What sets the most recent wave apart is more tangible than previous generations: Public action. Almost the converse of the quietude that typified the postwar German Jewish community, the new Jewish community is unabashedly on display (sometimes literally) for the world to see.

A New Zion?

Many of the Israelis who came to Berlin prior to the year 2000 seem to have assimilated into Berlin culture. They came before the Berlin Wall came down, to live in what was then 'trendy West Berlin': the swinging soho of the city in Kreuzberg and Schöneberg. There were artists, actors, and social misfits (not unlike today). Now, however, it is more common for an Israeli to find a home in trendy East Berlin – in neighborhoods such as Friedrichshain, Prenzlauer Berg, and Mitte

(although there is no reason to fret: The old West Berlin is still represented by a large population of Israelis living in Kreuzberg and Charlottenburg).

Five years ago, I knew there were Israelis living in Berlin. Once and a while one could spy a poster for an event. A blue Star of David would catch your eye, attached to a window or lamppost. In 2012 the movement of people and ideas surfaced in Berlin under the impact of the social media. Israelis in Berlin became a 'Facebook sensation.' There are currently over 7,000 active members of Berlin Israelis' Facebook account. This forum allows Israelis to prepare for the move to Berlin – it even helps many make the decision. Most importantly, it provides a singular place where Israelis, and by default Jews from all over, can navigate life in the German capital in a familiar and 'safe' place (the group is private). Israeli-themed club nights became regular venues for boozing and dancing. Hummus restaurants began to pop up in boroughs such as Prenzlauer Berg, Mitte, and Kreuzberg with unabashed Israeli themes and menus. Entrepreneurial spirits began holding events and artists began to be represented at citywide art shows. Hebrew can often be heard on the streets or while waiting at an *U-Bahn-Station* ('subway station'). With this population came life, art, music, food, and a population searching for new meaning – heralding a new era.

Another facet of Berlin's Jewish life that attracts many Jewish people from Europe and Israel is the Abraham Geiger College. Israelis, Hungarian, French, German, and Polish Jews (among others) have come to enroll in its Jewish Studies programs. In Berlin, one encounters 'hipster rabbinical students' – many of whom have not felt at home in study or worship available in their home countries and have chosen Berlin to follow their spiritual path. This raises an interesting point: Many people perceive Israelis flocking to Berlin as a form of escapism, or running away from Israeli politics or society. Yet, when one looks deeper into what these Israelis are doing in Berlin, it becomes clear that they are not running away; they are running *towards* their Israeliness, Jewishness and even Hebrew.

There are initiatives such as *Hamakom* ('The Place') created by Israelis, German and Croatian Jews as a forum for Jewish thought that some have found absent from mainstream Israeli Judaism. Berlin provides an open, seemingly liberated atmosphere for Judaic exploration. For many Israelis coming to Berlin, they suddenly find spirituality coming to the fore in their lives. Many Israelis have conveyed that in Israel 'being Jewish' is often taken for granted, normative to a point of banality, and often without any Jewish spiritual dimension. When they arrive in Berlin and find themselves living in a culture where Judaism (and Hebrew) is not central to the society, the desire for spirituality is sparked and its role in their lives becomes amplified. Of course, this is not true for every Israeli living in Berlin. In fact, the opposite is true for some, and their retreat from Israel is also an abandoning of their Jewish identity; but I would argue, based on my

research, that they are the minority. To find evidence of this, one does not have to look far: Initiatives like *Hamakom* host events devoted to study of Torah, Talmud and Jewish philosophy, and prayer. *Hamakom* works with rabbinical students, other initiatives, and even the World Zionist Organization to bring the beauty of Judaism to a new generation of people that seek a (re)connection with God, or wish to incorporate the traditions of Judaism as a culture in their own lives in Berlin, or simply seek an open and egalitarian space for Judaism in their daily lives. It would be false to say these people are running from Israel and Judaism.

Moreover, by organizing events that bring various ethnicities of Jews, Germans and Israelis together, a healing process has been set in motion, although this may not have been a direct objective of *Hamakom* or any initiative operating in Berlin today. Thus, one witnesses how, for the first time, Germans are being asked to talk about the guilt they carry, alongside Israelis and Jews conversing about the same issues. This is not just happening in brief 'sponsored forums' – meeting grounds where each party flies back to their respective homeland after the discussion. This is happening in a place where the homes they go back to are in Berlin. That makes a difference.

The Emergence of a 'Berliner Hebrew'

Modern Hebrew was born in Berlin, its seeds planted by the Jewish Enlightenment. Hebrew does not 'hide' in present-day Berlin. There is Hebrew on memorials, of course, but Hebrew is also being used in a new and interesting way. It is being used as a vehicle to examine the city of Berlin – its culture, politics, and very essence. A prime example of this phenomenon is *Spitz Magazine*, a well-received and well-constructed Hebrew-language publication that endows Israelis and Hebrew-speaking Russians or Germans (and others who know Hebrew) with the ability to conduct a discourse about Berlin in their own tongue. After all, a qualitative and serious discourse and the insights it can provide about Berlin life, politics, and society rest on nuances of language.

Hebrew, like all languages, is in constant flux. All language is descriptive, not prescriptive. What one sees now in Hebrew print and speech is Berliner or German words and phrases sneaking into the lexicon. One has to ask, when will 'Berliner-slang Hebrew' be official? Is it already so? When will these Berliner-slang terms make their way back to Israeli Hebrew? Or will Israeli Hebrew evolve in a way Berliner Hebrew may not? Or will the divergences be more geographical, as in American, Indian, and British English? Modern Hebrew being born, in part, in Berlin and, now returning to Berlin, is no coincidence. It makes sense that

people like Tal Alon via *Spitz Magazine* finds success bringing her Hebrew language to a lost 'ancestral' home of sorts. Hebrew simply does not share the same connection to other cities outside of Israel the way it does Germany and Berlin. Julius Fürst, Bernhard Bär, Wolf Heidenheim, and Solomon Frensdorff (amongst others) birthed Hebrew into the modern world – not from Israel, but from Berlin and Germany. These scholars provided the foundational labor that would lead men like Eliezer Ben-Yehuda to turn Hebrew into the practical, utilitarian modern language it is today.

There is another language that adds to the ease of integration and interactions in Berlin: English became unofficially a 'second vernacular' in Berlin after 2006 when Germany hosted the World Cup. English became a normal part of day-to-day life in Berlin after public transportation added English to announcements and signage – amongst various other manifestations of English usage around the city. The city's image was boosted from the international exposure, and Mayor Wowereit's active and trendy campaigns. Airlines began flying more frequently between Israel and Berlin. English became the vehicle by which both Israelis and Berliners communicate with one another, although as more Israelis perfect their German, this trend will wane. This also provided a common tongue for Jews of various origins to integrate into the city. In the Jewish community Hebrew is their common tongue, while outside of that circle, English is the *lingua franca*. Most Jews and Israelis know these two languages.

Mastery of Hebrew is becoming a standard for children at home, and even in kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools. Berlin has no shortage of Jewish-themed schools for children of all ages and denominations. Children of Israeli-born parents or mixed parents often speak Hebrew with one parent at home and learn German in kindergarten or school – while some are sent to schools where English or French is the primary languages. There are a myriad of child-oriented frameworks for newborns to young adults across Berlin offering classes, playgroups, and general activities in Hebrew. It is fairly simple for a parent to find a Jewish holiday event in Hebrew somewhere in Berlin, if not half a dozen events – depending on how religiously observant one happen to be. This, again, is empowered by social media and this generation's total embrace of it. Advertising, one could say, has never been freer for the individual to use.

The Hebrew Library serves as a bastion of Hebrew culture for adults and children. Currently held in the curator's home, Michal Zamir's *Hebrew Library* is a place for Israelis (and Hebrew-speakers or learners) to find Hebrew books and expand their own collections. It also hosts events, generally in Hebrew, that brings Israeli authors, scholars, and artists to Berlin. For children, there is a monthly reading club whose content usually centers on Jewish holidays, allowing children to mingle and speak Hebrew outside their homes or educational institu-

tions. A common thread among the Israelis behind these initiatives and collectives is that the profit motive is viewed as secondary to the opportunity to access a Hebrew-Israel and Jewish ambience.

Hummus and What Follows…

There is no denying that Berlin is a multicultural city. Berlin is a city with a mosaic quality, marked by its culinary variety – from Turkish kebab huts to Vietnamese pho houses, Russian supermarkets, and American burger joints, to bars of every genre one could dream of. All of them are teeming with artists, musicians, writers, businessmen, diplomats, tourists, and everything in between.

Israeli culture has been introduced and accepted within this Berlin mix. One does not have to look far to find hummus and pita. If you want an Israeli night, where Hebrew is the dominant language heard floating about the club as Israeli music blasts from speakers, you do not have to look far either. Most immigrants bring parts of their cultural baggage with them whatever their destination, and Israelis in Berlin are no exception; what is exceptional about Israelis and Jews in Berlin is the shared past. Seventy-five years ago, a Star of David in Berlin signified something foreign and sinister to Berliners; now it is a signpost for a great night at a club, or a film festival, or a good falafel. But the Israeli mark on the local cultural scene is not just about hummus and Stars of David. Israeli chefs are creating world-class cuisine… in Berlin. Artists are presenting Berlin through their Israeli or Jewish eyes in a way Berlin has never been perceived before. Musicians are revitalizing the old or creating things fresh and untried. Berlin provides the permissive atmosphere, but Israelis are the ones taking advantage of Berlin's openness. These new creations transcend national-ethnic origins or tradition, and promote and speak on behalf of the evolution of a society as a whole. People are asking themselves what it means to be Israeli, to be Jewish, to be a Berliner. How does one era of the past affect me more than another era of the past? The answers to those questions bubble to the surface in the way people are choosing to live their lives, create their art, and raise their children in Berlin.

Another aspect of Israeli life in Berlin is the development of a transnational identity. It has become fairly easy and affordable to keep one foot in Berlin and one foot in Israel. The idea of an expat going off to some foreign land and never being heard from again is dead in the social media age. It is easier to 'import' foods from home when you can just fly home, fill up a suitcase, and fly back to Berlin. Yet, there is more to this transnational identity on a deeper level, one that draws on a shared past that all Israelis have. Israel is a country of immi-

grants, where a significant portion of the population has experienced 'other lives' before they made *aliyah* to Israel. In the act of immigration newcomers shed large parts of their origin identity to become Israeli, whether these new Israelis hailed from Morocco or France or even the United States. While the same acculturation process exists in Berlin – the possibility of a transition from Israeli Jew to German is loaded. Despite patterns to the contrary, Jews in Israel harbor fears that the offspring of the people who shaped and built Israel at tremendous cost, will 'lose a generation' of Israelis to German assimilation. Is this fear valid? Not necessarily. Israelis are living in Berlin, some have embraced a Berliner lifestyle, but Hebrew, Judaism, and Israel are omnipresent in most of their lives. Coming from Israel, the memory of transition is still fresh and many maintain their Israeli identity and, in fact – perhaps ironically, find it easier to expand upon their Israeli identity in Germany than at home in Israel. In Germany, and Berlin, being Israeli or Jewish means something special to the individual. An aspect of your life is highlighted by default, and then the individual starts to look at their identity in a new light.

What the Future May Hold

The uprooting of a person from his place of birth to settle elsewhere is often seen as a negative for the nation abandoned and as a positive by the nation gaining a new citizen. The émigré is viewed at home as a loss to the workforce, while scientists and scholar are seen as a brain drain. One need look no further than the two Israeli citizens out of the three 2013 Nobel Prize laureates in chemistry – Arieh Warshel and Michael Levitt – whose breakthrough research was conducted in the United States, in order to grasp the enormity of the problem of a brain drain. Is the current trend of Israelis immigrating to Berlin a brain drain on Israeli society? It is hard to pin down, since Israelis in Berlin are not necessarily immigrants in the classic sense. I have used the term 'transnationals' for a reason: Israelis in Berlin travel home often, their families are still rooted in Israel, and therefore their identities and allegiances and even their center of gravity has not shifted. Israel, Hebrew, and Judaism occupy a large part of their lives in a host of ways. Current Jewish culture and Israeli culture in Berlin is about *integration*, not assimilation. By bringing these cultures to Berlin, it becomes impossible to leave them behind or abandon them in Israel.

A phenomenon can be remarkable, but, it can also be merely something that is observable – plain and simple. Israelis coming to Berlin is a phenomenon, and many people tend to ask whether or not it is a remarkable one. Over the last years there has been a mini-explosion of media and filmic coverage of this

niche migrant group. Israelis moving to Berlin have fascinated Danish, French, British, American, Israeli, and German news outlets. Often, however, fascination borders more on perplexion and suspicion – dismay if you wish, than objective and acute reportage. It is common to see Israeli or German news teams, cameraman in tow, interviewing Israelis at public events. The Israeli news-gathers tend to want to know how one can survive in Berlin as an artist without money. The Germans want to know how the Israelis deal with the history... in the subtext, asking 'whether they are forgiven yet.' Today's Berliners would be proud to say they were 'the generation and the place where Israeli Jews forgave the Germans'... Yet, for many Israeli Jews, moving to Berlin is not about forgiveness and history. It is about a personal journey – an artistic endeavor, a spiritual awakening, bacchanalian nights, and ancestral stirrings. Having said that, nevertheless, for some there *is* a catharsis to be found in Berlin. It is easy to find Israelis in Berlin whose family was not directly affected by the Holocaust. Israelis from Moroccan or Iranian families, and members of minority groups have relationships with the Holocaust shaped by Israeli education, not by personal-familial experience. This is a distinction that is important to Israelis in Berlin. The baggage that comes along with Germany and Berlin and places like Wannsee or Ravensbrück have become a shared Jewish-ergo-Israeli heritage. Even if the Israeli or Jewish person living in Berlin has no direct connection to the Holocaust, its markers and echoes still ring true in their ears as they live in Berlin, amongst its ghosts.

Many Israelis are looking for a new definition of what it means to be 'Israeli' – a definition that does not focus on Jewish powerlessness and vulnerability, of genocide and victimhood. Nor do they seek an identity tied to media propaganda, sirens and traumatic 'breaking news' loops. They seek an Israeli identity and culture that venerates Jewish philosophers, artists, chemists, physicists, and writers (even the ones that do not fit into a specific national-oriented cone of influence). They seek to enlighten the world that there is more to Israel and being Israeli, or even being Jewish than settlements, occupations, and intifadas. There is a deep and beautiful culture behind the strife, one that is young and trying to find its footing in the world. Furthermore, it is not the desire of any Israeli in Berlin to ignore the Nazi past founded in Munich and executed in Berlin. Israeli Jews seem to be clearly saying that there is more to the intersection of Berlin, Judaism, Israel, and Germany than just the Holocaust, arms deals and politicalization. The past and present can also be something to be explored, utilized, and respected as a whole.

Making Aliyah to Berlin: The Documentary

Aliyah Le Berlin tells the story of Israeli, American, Hungarian, Croatian, German and Polish Jews who are returning to Berlin to start a new life, or continue an existing one. Often when an Israeli decides to move to Berlin, trepidation and worry runs through the family. ('How safe is it for Jews these days? How safe is it for MY daughter or son to walk the streets at night in a capital with such a terrifying history?') Of course, these individuals do not board a time machine and travel back to Berlin in 1942 (or another pogrom-filled era.) They are simply getting on a commercial airliner bound for a modern cosmopolis – a city that hosts one of the most vibrant art scenes on earth, becoming more multicultural every day, a place rife with opportunity and hope.

Aliyah Le Berlin weaves the stories of ten Jews (and three expert observers) as they navigate Berlin's scenes and adjust to a world where Hebrew and Judaism are not center stage. They deal with all aspects of Jewish history and life – from the birth of modern Hebrew to its current evolution towards a Berliner slang, encountering Holocaust memorials on a daily, sometimes on an hourly basis when on the streets, and rediscovering a Judaism that for some was long dormant in their own hearts.

Aliyah Le Berlin uses Moses Mendelssohn's personal history and Berlin as the 'cradle' of Jewish Enlightenment (the *Haskalah*) as a framing device to emphasize the current influx and 'neo-reformation' experienced by today's Jews in Berlin. Step-by-step, we see how Moses entered the city as a young, homeless hunchback and began learning, exploring, and creating. Similarly we follow Israelis as they run Hebrew libraries, a Hebrew magazine, and various Israeli missions to connect their islands of Israeliness and Hebrew with mainstream Berliner culture. From there, the film turns to focus on members of the community who have a direct connection with the Holocaust who are in Berlin today: Viewers meet Henry Wassermann – hero of Israel's wars, a retired scholar and expert of German-Israeli relations, and a Holocaust survivor who speaks of his life in Israel, his life in Berlin, and his memories of his deaf father's desperate and successful mission to save his family from the Nazis in Poland. After the harrowing portrayal of life in a city so closely connected to his family's near extermination, the film shifts focus to Mendelssohn's Jewish reformation and its impact on Judaism, then examine the 'neo-reformation' afoot within Judaism in Berlin today. German, Croatian, Hungarian, and Israeli Jews speak about how Judaism is changing for them, by being in Berlin. We explore their burgeoning world – filled with initiatives, events, and new community frameworks that are blossoming in the German capital. What emerges is a blend of transnationalism supported by a population

that thrives in their cosmopolitanism, without jettisoning their particularism as Jews, as they seek a higher truth.

What we discovered is not a community on the run; but a community that is growing, taking liberties, and empowering Judaism, Hebrew, and Israeli culture. As a community, they ask questions about the past, the present and the future; as a movement of people, the past is being illuminated in ways that it has not been addressed for decades. People are again exploring the merits of groundbreaking philosophies and teachings of German-Jewish thinkers such as Mendelssohn, Baeck, Jonas, Fürst, and others. This film and the topics it addresses serve, in essence, as a 'reintroduction' for a broader audience to the ideas of these German-Jewish scholars, inviting German viewers to further investigate the shared legacy of the past they carry. Because of the hub of German-Jewish scholarship blossoming in Berlin, the way we talk about Germany, Berlin, and Jews is forever being changed. As a result, what Jews teach their children in the next generation will differ from what their parents and grandparents were taught. For the last 70 years when one spoke of Germany, Berlin, and Jews, the dominant theme was the Holocaust, and rightfully so; however, when the next generation learns about Berlin and Jews, the dominant theme may very well center on Berlin as Europe's largest and most vibrant Jewish community – a phoenix arisen. Will this invite a sequel to *Making Aliyah to Berlin*? In cinematography we say 'everyone loves a comeback story.'

Of all the capitals of Europe, of all Europe's diverse cities, none have as deep and profound a relationship with Judaism and Israel as Berlin has. Judaism and Berlin are invariably intertwined, for better or for worst. No other city in Europe, perhaps no other city in the world makes more sense for Jews to call home – to reclaim as their home. Jews have 795-year-long history with Berlin. The multitudes of Jews coming to Berlin today are not letting twelve dark years obliterate that history, or overshadow and dominate the future of what will come tomorrow "for all eternity."