

The Hope of Thousands of Years

These walls
built on the struggle of all of those before us
We made them strong

These hallways
carry the echoes of our ancestors
With all of the hope for a future

We designed, we planned, we shook hands, we asked for time and treasure
Knowing that one day, we would have this home

These walls
This Bimah
This sanctuary

We, small children, ran laughing down its hallways
The elders gathered to plan for those that would seek its refuge

Rabbis and Cantors brought us the prayers and rituals - thousands of years old yet
somehow new each time we spoke them
In unison, we chanted here
as thousands of years converged into a moment
All because those ancient words were spoken here
in these new walls, in these shiny new halls

Light poured in and one season turned into the next
Generations gathered to celebrate
Children were born - and in an instant became adults
Right before our eyes
They became
Ready to repair the world

Families gathered to mourn
We prayed for the sick
We hugged
We ate
We sang
Candles were lit as the rhythm of the Sabbath beat like a metronome through the years

Generations of us remember the embrace of these walls
This space, claimed as our own
We ate at its table, we hoped, we lived, we learned, we mourned
Always feeling the embrace and the joy of our makom

“It’s never too late to save a building,” I said with naïve Hope
As I looked into my big brother’s eyes
I saw how he’d hoped, too

But our numbers got smaller
Even as our faith remained steadfast
Time took what Hope brought

The ceilings and walls crumbled beyond our notice
As we lived within these walls
So sacred and so comforting
Never thinking that the strength of this building could succumb to anything

Certainly, not to time.

After all, it had weathered every storm.

We prepared to go
The children’s laughter still echoing, through time
Like faraway music from the countries we came from

The halls empty as we prepare to take our leave

But we can almost smell the challah baking and chicken roasting
From the communal kitchen, always ready to serve
Warm smells of home
warm reminders that we are never alone

Our ancestors walk with us
And while we will not be able to continue to walk these halls, we’ll remember the feeling
of how solid the floor was under our feet

As our building aged, so did we

All of us tired yet still hopeful for community
Finding new ways to gather
New ways to worship, to love, laugh, live, celebrate and cry
Together, always together

Yes, it’s time to leave this home

Our parents and grandparents, gone now, still stand behind us, with the strength of the Jewish people...

And a bond that was *never* established by a place

It was never about the walls, the bimah or the offices where decisions got made, or the sanctuary where we gathered to speak ancient words

It was always about the bond between us

A tribe, a family, a constellation of the living
who walked together with those who passed
The strength of our generations
the core of our shared humanity

We say now, thank you to these walls
and how they held us in their warm embrace
Thank you to the clergy
their words and songs made us one
We take this feeling of home with us
as we close the door behind us

Looking out at a new way of being
Our people: we've been here before

No amount of wandering will ever stop us
From remembering who we are
and who came before us

In our new home, we promise to remember

And continue to repair the world
and find strength in each other

By Paula Berg born 1965, for:

-Judy Berg born 1938
-Lillian Schwartz born 1909
-Joseph Schwartz born 1907
-And all our ancestors before them