



# BETH EL

## The Heights Synagogue

# NEWSLETTER

January 2019  
5779 טבת / שבט



RABBI  
MICHAEL UNGAR

*Injustice  
anywhere is  
a threat  
to justice  
everywhere.*

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.,  
"Letter from Birmingham Jail,"  
16 April 1963

## Shaping our 2019

Just as Rosh Hashanah is a time of reflection and new beginnings, for many of us the start of a new secular year serves the same purpose. We look back on 2018 and ponder how to do better in 2019. We recall the good and the bad. We make resolutions for how to better in the new year.

This last year was a particularly difficult one for the American Jewish community. The tragedy in Pittsburgh and the spike in anti-Semitic incidents in our country have given us pause; some of us have wondered about our future in the United States. What can we do in 2019 that will have us looking back and saying it was a good year for the Jewish community?

There is no simple answer, but there are many things we can do. At the core, is a recommitment to the values of Judaism: *Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Chasadim*—learning, worship, and acts of loving kindness.

The new year will bring with it opportunities to learn: the Learners' Torah Discussion Group, *Mishna* class, Lunch and Learn, and some new programs that will be shared soon. Individually, we can also keep up with Jewish periodicals, new books, and films to enrich our understanding of our world. Hopefully, my *d'verei torah* also help us to see Torah in a new light.

In 2019, we will also continue to have our wonderful, engaging, and participatory prayer services. At my installation, every one of my friends and family visiting commented on how wonderful the *tefilla* and atmosphere were. We have something very special going on at BE –THS, and we should share that with others. We will also explore ways to make the service even more meaningful.

Finally, this is a year in which we should recommit to helping each other and those around us. There are, of course, smaller actions like bringing a meal to someone who is convalescing, giving someone a ride, or running an errand for them. We also pride ourselves on being there for those in times of sadness, like at a funeral or *shiva minyan*, and being there to lift spirits higher at times of celebration and milestones.

In 2019, we cannot, however, forget about the prophetic obligation we have to bring justice to our world. There are many in our midst who suffer in so many ways and there is much we can do to alleviate their suffering—in a direct way, and by working to solve the underlying problems. Greater Cleveland Congregations is one of the ways that BE –THS participates in the never ending struggle for justice for all; we should

*(continued on page 5)*

Beth El - The Heights Synagogue builds vibrant Jewish community.  
We welcome all in participatory, traditional, egalitarian worship and learning.

Saturday Morning Services at 9:15 ♦ 3246 Desota Ave., Cleveland Hts., OH 44118 ♦ ☎216-320-9667

## CO-PRESIDENTS



ROBIN DUBIN



BUD STERN

### Contact Information

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS?  
COMMENTS? COMPLAINTS?

Please do not hesitate to contact the

Presidents by e-mail  
[president@bethelheights.org](mailto:president@bethelheights.org)

or telephone

Robin (216) 382-8848

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#### HELP US

##### STAY IN TOUCH!

Please be sure we have your current contact information.

Send changes to  
[info@bethelheights.org](mailto:info@bethelheights.org)

or call

(216) 320-9667

#### KEEP UP WITH THE NEWS!

##### JOIN THE

##### BE-THS LISTS!

Send an e-mail to

Mick Miller,

[mick@mickmill.com](mailto:mick@mickmill.com),

if you need help with

signing up.

# Annual MLK Day Food Drive

Beth El –The Heights Synagogue’s Annual MLK Food Drive will be held Sunday, January 20, from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM. All types of non-perishable food are appreciated, especially canned meats and fish (opened packages cannot be accepted).

All donations are will be given to the Heights Emergency Food Center, (<https://tinyurl.com/yd3ety4r>). Checks are also welcomed, and should be made out to the Heights Emergency Food Center. Our past food drives have been very successful; we hope to continue that tradition.

If you would like to volunteer for the food drive, please contact Scott Wachter at [wachter@nacs.net](mailto:wachter@nacs.net).

Scott Wachter

## Tu BiSh’vat Outdoor Outing

OK, so we can’t read the calendar. We know MLK Day is January 21. So is Tu BiSh’vat. But a group of us will get together to enjoy the great outdoors on Sunday, January 20, anyway (weather permitting). If you want to join a carpool, meet at the shul at 9:45 AM; otherwise, meet us at Chapin Forest at 10:30 AM at the Pine Lodge Ski Center, 10381 Hobart Road, Kirtland, OH 44094. Return time will be approximately 2:00 to 3:00 PM. Cost is \$5/hr. for ski rental or \$3/hr. for show shoe rental; it’s best to bring cash. There will be a hiking/snow shoeing group and a skiing group, and if there isn’t snow then we’ll all hike. We’ll go to Patterson’s Fruit Farm afterward for refreshments. If you can drive or would like to join a carpool, email Becky Schur at [rmschur@gmail.com](mailto:rmschur@gmail.com).

## Learners’ Torah Discussions Open to All

Join us to study and discuss selections from the weekly Torah portion. We consider commentaries, raise questions, and share tips for using the Chumash. Each week’s lesson is self-contained, so come as your schedule permits. The sessions are accessible for non-Hebrew speakers or readers and open to people at all levels of experience. We meet in the Community Room, after the Torah is taken out and the portion is introduced (about 10:20 AM to 10:30 AM), and rejoin the service in time for the d’var torah.

Questions? Contact Mia Buchwald Gelles: 216-321-6717 or [miabgelles@gmail.com](mailto:miabgelles@gmail.com).

Upcoming Learners Torah Discussion Dates:

January 5 – *Parashat Vayera*

January 19 – *Parashat B’shalakh*

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<http://www.bethelheights.org/>

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For address or mailing list change, call 216-320-9667

Lunch and Learn, January 12

# The ABCs of Autism Spectrum Disorder: A First-Hand Account

The talk will be facilitated by Mia Buchwald Gelles, co-founder of Milestones Autism Resources, a nonprofit located in Warrensville Heights that works to improve the lives of individuals with autism. Joining Gelles is Molly D. Dann-Pipinias, a young adult on the spectrum, who will share her personal insight as a member of the autism community. Dann is a part of the Milestones staff and also serves as a Goodlife Ambassador with the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

## Yahrzeits, November 2018

### Tevet ~ טבת

Dora Tracht	24 Tevet
Joe Silver	25 Tevet 5733
Sylvia Tucker	25 Tevet
Charles Robert Bruml	25 Tevet 5755
Rosalyn Louise Berkman	26 Tevet 5758
Morris Givertz	27 Tevet
Alfred Adler	28 Tevet 5751
Seth Lettofsky	28 Tevet 5777
Joseph Savino	28 Tevet
Henry Gelfand	29 Tevet
Louis Jacobs	29 Tevet 5730

### Sh'vat ~ שבט

Mary Lucita Ball	1 Sh'vat 5772
Heinz Gelles	2 Sh'vat 5773
Harriet Feldman	2 Sh'vat
Victor Reiss	3 Sh'vat
Theresa Siegler	3 Sh'vat
David Carr	3 Sh'vat
Mordechai Lugasy	4 Sh'vat
Rudolph Landesman	6 Sh'vat
Ziskind Alex Simon	6 Sh'vat
Isaac Bruder	7 Sh'vat
Eugene Goodman	7 Sh'vat
Ethel Newman	7 Sh'vat
Leon Stern	9 Sh'vat
Max Fromson	10 Sh'vat
Blumi Zavelowitz	10 Sh'vat
Louis Sobelman	11 Sh'vat
Dorothy Neuger	11 Sh'vat
Fannie Levine	13 Sh'vat
Jacob Wilkenfeld	13 Sh'vat

Pinkas Zavell	13 Sh'vat
Sonny Lerner	14 Sh'vat
Marilyn Protus Fischer	16 Sh'vat 5748
Mary Malkin	17 Sh'vat
Charles Auerbach	17 Sh'vat
Isadore Fromson	17 Sh'vat
Julius Kammen	17 Sh'vat 5707
Madelyn Palevsky	17 Sh'vat 5770
David Muszynski	18 Sh'vat
Gayle Kuhr Sharpe	18 Sh'vat
Anna Genuth	18 Sh'vat
Beatrice Schweickert	18 Sh'vat 5757
William Berkman	19 Sh'vat 5739
Abraham Margolis	19 Sh'vat
Howard B. Cohen	19 Sh'vat
Mathilda Mendelow	19 Sh'vat
Jerome Bernstein	20 Sh'vat
Rose Reiss	20 Sh'vat
Abraham Louis Brudnick	21 Sh'vat 5747
Edith Gelfand	21 Sh'vat 5737
Dora Kazdan	21 Sh'vat 5716
Abe Lipoff	21 Sh'vat
Meyer Goldberg	22 Sh'vat 5765
Scott Mendel	22 Sh'vat 5771
Dan Shoham	22 Sh'vat 5778
Robert Starr	22 Sh'vat 5775
Helen Haskin	23 Sh'vat
Sam Cohen	24 Sh'vat
Leonard Glazer	24 Sh'vat
Joy Rosewater Bruml	25 Sh'vat 5774
Irvin Lerner	25 Sh'vat
Jules Pepper	25 Sh'vat

**BE-THS in Cleveland Jewish News' "Source" magazine:**  
If you get *The Jewish News*, check out the article and ad about BE-THS in *Source*, published annually in December. If you don't get *CJN*, *Source* is available online. Share it with our friends, and if you know of anyone new coming to town, be sure they get a copy, please!

# NEWS FROM BETH EL

# חדשות

## Refuah Sh'lema to:

- Harvey Jacobs
- Marsha Katz
- Arnold Stone

רפואה שלימה!

## Mazel Tov to:

- Adina and Mark Davidson, on the recent birth of their first grandson, Netta Nissim Richman. Parents are Joshua Davidson and Bec Richman; they reside near Philadelphia.

מזל טוב!

## Yasher Koah to:

- Grace Bloom, daughter of Michael Bloom and Peggy Sullivan, who was recently inducted into the National Beta Club honor society for academics and service by Mr. Johnny Bush, principal of H.B. Plant High School in Tampa, Florida, where the family recently relocated.
- Miriam Giardina, who recently led Musaf for her first time.
- Menachem Shoham, who will retire at the end of December from Case Western Reserve University, after 29 years in the Department of Biochemistry at the School of Medicine. Menachem plans to move to Israel in February, in order to spend more time with his grandchildren and to get involved with a biopharmaceutical company he founded in Israel with his eldest son, Yaron.
- Rabbi Barry Starr, whose son, Uri, recently graduated from Ohio State University with a B.A. in Business. Uri plans to remain in Columbus where he will work for Skillken-Gold, a real estate development firm.

יישר כוח!

## Thanks for Contributions to:

- Rabbi Moshe Adler, in memory of Max Adler z"l.
- Rabbi Moshe Adler, in memory of Nechama Schultz-Shalit z"l.
- Bruce and Judie Amsel, towards the cost of a new refrigerator.
- Judie Amsel, who donated the fun 3D Magen David Hanukkah spectacles in memory of her mother, Rae Beckenstein z"l, whose (English date) Yahrzeit was on the day of the Hanukkah party.
- Sherry Ball and Marty Gelfand, in memory of Sanford Gelfand, z"l.

תודה!

- Michael and Shelley Bloomfield, to the Kiddush Fund.
- Joe and Mia Buchwald Gelles, to the Kiddush Fund, to cover hot dishes ten times a year.
- Joe and Mia Buchwald Gelles, to the Scholar in Residence Program.
- Joe and Mia Buchwald Gelles, toward the cost of the ad in *CJN's Source* magazine.
- Leon Gabinet, in memory of his sister, Marion Siskind z"l.
- Ilene Gertman
- Barry Gorn and Lynn Teichman
- Nancy Levin, with congratulations to her son-in-law, Rabbi Michael Ungar, on his installation as Rabbi.
- Nancy Levin, in honor of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Beth El –The Heights Synagogue.
- Daniel and Carole Litt, in memory of Meyer Reshotko z"l.
- Gary and Marilyn Magden, in memory of Sadie Magden z"l.
- Stephen Pepper and Linda Tobin, toward expenses of cleaning the synagogue.
- Adam and Samantha Probst
- Juliana Sadock Savino, to the Kiddush Fund.
- Joe and Mia Buchwald Gelles, Shirley and Shlomoh Sherman, in memory of Sadie and Harry Sherman z"l.
- Devorah Silverman, to the Kiddush Fund.
- Michael Steklouf
- David and Teri Tomberg
- Joe and Mia Buchwald Gelles, Leonard Tracht
- Rabbi Michael and Michele Ungar

## December First Celebration Thank You: תודה!

We had a great celebration on December 1, of Rabbi Ungar's installation, of Rabbi Adler's official elevation to "emeritus" status, and of the 20th anniversary of the founding of our shul. No one got an accurate count, but over 140 people joined us for Kiddush, yet Marvin managed, with his usual equanimity, to provide enough food, beautifully presented. A large delegation came from Columbus, of Rabbi Ungar's family, friends, and former congregants. Contributors were:

- Molly Brudnick
- Bill and Carol Bruml

- Frank and Jeanette Buchwald
- Barbara and Barry Epstein
- Judy Feingold
- Joe and Mia Buchwald Gelles
- Adi and Judith Gerblich
- Miriam Giardina
- Barry Gorn and Lynn Teichman
- Fern Grunberger
- Craig and Janet Hoffman
- Sharona Hoffman and Andy Podgurski
- Lee Kohrman
- Cheryl Birkner Mack and Eric Mack
- Eric Mazelis
- Stephen Pepper and Linda Tobin
- Mike Steklof
- Bud Stern
- David and Teri Tomberg
- Lenny Tracht
- Rabbi Michael and Michele Ungar
- Beth and Scott Wachter
- Bruce and Polly Wilkenfeld
- Mary and Richard Zigmond

Thanks to Erin Rocchio and Becky Schur, who provided flowers for the Kiddush tables.

Thanks to all who helped organize the event, who helped cook and clean up, who printed programs, or contributed in any way. We did not keep track of all of the names, but please know that your efforts were greatly appreciated! **תודה!**

Thanks to all who helped make the Hanukkah Party a great success. Again, we did not keep track of names, but we really appreciate all you did! **תודה!**

*(Shaping our 2019, continued from page 1)* continue to deepen our commitment to this organization.

Of course, none of this happens without the support of everyone in our community. Time, resources, energy, and love poured into our congregation, Jewish Cleveland, and *Klal Yisrael* are also needed to ensure a better year ahead.

This is a lot of work, but the rewards far outweigh the efforts. Wishing all of you a happy, healthy, and fulfilling 2019!

Thanks for Contributions to the End-of-Year Campaign! **תודה רבה!**  
*All contributors will be acknowledged together in the February newsletter.*

Thanks for Kiddush Sponsorship to: January 19 – Menachem Shoham, in honor of his retirement, his 75th birthday, and his pending move to Israel.


Thanks for Simcha Kiddush sponsorships to: **תודה!**  
**November**

- Sherry Ball and Marty Gelfand, in honor of Sherry's birthday.
- Joe and Mia Buchwald Gelles, in honor of their son Noam's birthday.
- Beth and Scott Wachter, in honor of their wedding anniversary.

**December**  
➤ Rabbi Barry Starr, in honor of his son Uri's graduation from Ohio State University.

Thanks for Mailing Help to: **תודה!**  
 ➤ Robin Dubin  
 ➤ Marsha Katz  
 ➤ Richard Krueck  
 ➤ Bud Stern  
 ➤ Lenny Tracht

Thanks for New Member Gift Bags to:  
 ➤ Linda Tobin, who has taken bags containing a bottle of grape juice, Shabbat candles, and the Shabbat book, "A Day Apart," by Noam Zion and Shawn Fields-Meyer, to each of the families who have joined our congregation this year.



# Shabbat Playdate



Now Weekly!  
11:00-11:45 am  
in the  
Childcare Room

Jewish-themed  
singing  
and stories  
for children  
7 and younger.



Rabbi Michael Ungar

# CALENDAR, JANUARY 2019

5779 שבת / שבט



Sunday,  
January 20,  
10 AM to 2 PM

Please bring  
unopened,  
non-perishable  
food items to  
the shul's main  
entrance.

Volunteers  
will collect it  
from you;  
no need to get  
out of your car.

Checks will  
also be gladly  
accepted.  
Make checks  
out to "Heights  
Emergency Food  
Center."

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29 – *Parashat Shemot*; Scott Wachter will give the *d'var torah*.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5 – *Parashat Vayera*; Nina Sobel will give the *d'var torah*.

ABOUT 10:20 AM – **The Learners' Torah Discussion Group** will meet in the Community Room to discuss the parsha; they will rejoin the congregation in time for the *d'var*.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12 – *Parashat Bo*; Rabbi Ungar will give the *d'var torah*.

AFTER SERVICES – **Lunch and Learn with Mia Buchwald Gelles, "The ABCs of Autism Spectrum Disorder: A First-Hand Account.** See page 3 for further information.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18

6:30 PM – **Kabbalat Shabbat** services (teacher TBA), followed by vegetarian-friendly pescatarian dinner. Cost: \$10/person. Pre-paid registration requested by January 14. (You can register online by clicking <http://www.bethelheights.org/kabbalat-shabbat/>)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 19 – *Parashat B'shalakh*; Robin Dubin will give the *d'var torah*.

ABOUT 10:20 AM – **The Learners' Torah Discussion Group** will meet in the Community Room to discuss the parsha; they will rejoin the congregation in time for the *d'var*.

AFTER SERVICES – **Menachem Shoham is sponsoring Kiddush** in honor of his retirement from Case Western Reserve University, his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, and his pending move to Israel.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20

10:00 AM TO 2:00 PM – **MLK Day Food Drive** for the benefit of the Heights Food Pantry. Drive-by and drop-off convenience! *Details on page 2.*

9:45 AM TO 2 OR 3:00 PM – **Hike or cross country ski with your friends at Chapin Woods** (weather-dependent). Carpools available. See page 2 for further information.

MONDAY, JANUARY 21 – *Tu BiShvat*

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26 – *Parashat Yitro*; Rabbi Ungar will give the *d'var torah*.

AFTER SERVICES – **Monthly Simcha Kiddush**, when we celebrate some of the happy events our members have shared with us this month.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2 – *Parashat Mishpatim*; Michael Steklof will give the *d'var torah*.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16

AFTER SERVICES – **Lunch and Learn with Rabbi Barry Starr: "Male-Female Relationships in Jewish Law and Lore: Expected Norms and Mores."**

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22

6:30 PM – **Kabbalat Shabbat** services (teacher TBA), followed by vegetarian-friendly pescatarian dinner. Cost: \$10/person. Pre-paid registration requested by February 18.

The following article was printed in the *Plain Dealer* on December 7, 2018. It cites our shul's involvement with local immigrants and quotes member Robin Koslen at length, so I am reprinting it here, attached only to the emailed copies of the newsletter.

## Anti-HIAS rant by accused Pittsburgh shooter leaves Cleveland Jewish refugee group 'heartbroken'

By Brian Albrecht, *The Plain Dealer*, [balbrecht@plaind.com](mailto:balbrecht@plaind.com)



The Nayef refugee family is welcomed to America by Rabbi Joshua L. Caruso of the Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple in Beachwood at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport in 2017. The Nayefs arrived from a refugee camp in Turkey and are originally from Aleppo, Syria. (Chuck Crow/The Plain Dealer) (Chuck Crow, The Plain Dealer)

CLEVELAND, Ohio – Hours before Robert Bowers allegedly shot 11 people to death in a Pittsburgh synagogue on October 27, he was suspected of posting a message targeting the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS).

The posting read: *“HIAS likes to bring in invaders that kill our people. I can’t sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I’m going in.”* The shooting was a horror, but the posting also came as a shock to officials of the group created in 1881 to aid Jewish immi-

grants to America who were fleeing persecution in Russia and Eastern Europe.

“I’ll never forget that comment. We’ve never been on the receiving end of threats of violence,” said Bill Swersey, HIAS senior director of communications.

“That he invoked our name at all is off the charts,” he added. “I don’t have anything to compare that to. There are people who don’t support us, but it has never gotten to that level.”

The posting may have reflected the group's changing role in recent years.

While noting that "almost every American Jewish family has some connection to HIAS," Swersey said the group has expanded to include non-Jewish refugees from more than 20 different countries.

"We understand, we have an empathy for refugees," Swersey said. "Helping refugees and welcoming a stranger is repeatedly mentioned in the Torah, and is a very strong expression of Jewish values."

HIAS is one of nine resettlement agencies working with the U.S. State Department's Refugee Admissions program, sending new arrivals to 20 sites across the country.

Working through a network of local social service agencies, its services include resettlement assistance, counseling, citizenship and education programs.

Since 2016 the number of HIAS-assisted refugees has dropped from 4,191 to 1,632 in direct relation to the lowered levels of refugees allowed into the U.S. by the Trump administration.

In Ohio, HIAS has partnered with the nonprofit US Together, headquartered in Columbus with offices in Cleveland and Toledo.

Nadia Kasvin, US Together director, whose family came to this country from the Ukraine 25 years ago, said the group was created in 2003 by Eastern European refugees, and continues to be largely staffed by former refugees.

She said HIAS is one of several US Together partners in an effort that has re-settled 7,000 refugees in the past 15 years.

But the possible mention of HIAS by the accused synagogue shooter left Kasvin disheartened.

"I'm really heartbroken by all that rhetoric about HIAS 'bringing invaders,'" she said. "It really hits close to home."

"We are Jewish refugees, giving back to our community," she added. "We were given so many opportunities when we came to this country, and made a success."

"I want be sure that everybody who comes after us is given the same opportunity to reach their full potential."

To that end the group offers some 30 programs covering housing, employment, financial literacy, education, and other support services.

Kasvin said neither the synagogue shooting or comments regarding HIAS will "affect what we do. We believe in our mission very strongly. We will continue to do what we do."

Northeast Ohio has had a long tradition of aiding new Jewish immigrants starting in the late 19th century with two groups – the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and Hebrew Relief Association – that merged in 1883 and later became known as the Jewish Family Service Association (JFSA) of Cleveland in 1943.

As one official of the Hebrew Relief Association noted in 1895, "We have tried to make some of the applicants independent by giving them horses and wagons or establishing them in little places of business, and I am pleased to say we have accomplished a great deal of good."

The JFSA's immigrant assistance continued through and after World War II, resettling refugees and Holocaust survivors, and into the 1990s with Russian refugees, but has since been largely discontinued.

Swersey, of HIAS, noted that the group is often supported by local synagogues in refugee resettlement assistance.

In Northeast Ohio this includes Beth El – the Heights Synagogue where a group of members have provided donations of household items and financial support to local refugee resettlement agencies including US Together.

"If you're Jewish in the United States, you're not very far removed from being a refugee or immigrant yourself," said Robin Koslen, a member of the synagogue.

She remembered her mother talking about the help she got from HIAS at Ellis Island when she came to this country from the Ukraine in 1920.

"She just talked about how scary it was, and how great it was to have somebody meet you there who could speak your language," Koslen said.



“It was so interesting to me, all these years later, when I started becoming familiar with HIAS and realized that Jews don’t need it (refugee aid) right now, so they took the skill set and applied to the next group needing help.”

Koslen, who previously taught English as a second language courses, said synagogue members have been particularly supportive of the new refugees from Bhutan who have settled in the area.

Her first reaction to the Pittsburgh shooting was personal because her sister lives in the same neighborhood (but does not attend that synagogue).

Secondly, “It was just so sad,” she said. “Here is this group doing something so positive, and here were people who see this as something to be afraid of and work against.”

Three years ago the Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple in Beachwood invited representatives of US Together to speak at the synagogue.

“From that, sprang a stronger interest in volunteering, getting to know refugees, and what kind of needs these people have,” said Rabbi Robert Nosanchuk.

Staff members of US Together meet with members of the Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple to promote support of refugee resettlement efforts in Cleveland.

Staff members of US Together meet with members of the Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple to promote support of refugee resettlement efforts in Cleveland. Photo courtesy of Rabbi Robert Nosanchuk.

The outreach to refugees by some 20-30 synagogue members included greeting a family of Syrian refugees when they arrived at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport last year.

The greeters included Rabbi Joshua L. Caruso of the Fairmount Temple.

“That family was not only meeting its first Jew, but meeting a leader of the Jewish community,” Nosanchuk said. “Imagine, the first person who tells you welcome, and prays for you, is a rabbi.”

The effort is in keeping with Jewish tradition, according to Nosanchuk.

“There are no less than 36 times that the sacred Torah scroll commanded us to welcome the stranger and to not oppress them,” he noted.

He also recalled personal family experience in that his late grandmother, who died this year at age 101, came to this country with her family as refugees when she was just 16.

“Where would my life be without the resources that were dedicated to help her find her way?” he asked.

In addition to the airport welcome, synagogue members have donated food to local refugee families, and, in Nosanchuk’s case, a set of bunk beds.

With the recent decline in refugees admitted to the U.S. – down to a cap of 45,000 from 110,000 in 2016 – Nosanchuk said there has been a corresponding loss of local US Together staff to coordinate local refugee aid.

However, “we’re actively looking for ways to help whenever and wherever the opportunity exists to advocate for policies that would be more affirming to this nation’s history of immigration, including refugees,” he said.

It’s a mission, according to Nosanchuk.

He referred to an observation once made by a HIAS official: “We used to help refugees because they were Jews. Now we help them because we are Jews.”

<https://www.cleveland.com/metro/2018/12/anti-hias-rant-by-accused-pittsburgh-shooter-leaves-cleveland-jewish-refugee-group-heartbroken.html>