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Speech by Jonathan Coenen, assistant to the president of the BADEHAUS at the opening ceremony of the Remembrance Place BADEHAUS on the 21/10/18

Translated by Jonathan Coenen

My grandfather died a year ago.

My German grandfather, who was born in 1935, tried to give an answer to Nationalsocialism and the Holocaust - with his life in manifold ways throughout his life.

As his grandchild I experienced this.

My grandfather's family weren't Nazis, but still: his single mother, my great-grandmother, went to Litzmannstadt in the so-called Warthegau, to earn her living. The Germans had renamed the Polish city of Lodz into Litzmannstadt.

His mother, a simple peasant woman from Swabia, was employed in the city council and took the tramcar 41 from her flat to her place of work - right through the Jewish ghetto. There and back. On a daily basis. It was the second largest ghetto after Warsaw and was used

as interstation before transportation to the extermination camps. My grandfather tried to grasp and respond to his mother's silent, inactive, paralyzed watching or looking away, turning away.

His legacy to his children and grandchildren, also to me: the tikkun olam.

Which means in Hebrew: world repair, extinction of defects, restoration of harmony. Jewish tradition teaches, that Jews bear responsibility not only for their own moral, spiritual, and material welfare, but also for the welfare of society at large.

May we be on the move in this matter - as per my grandfather. He exemplified this to us through his own life.

Simultaneously to the death of my grandfather and his handing over the responsibility of tikkun olam to the next generation(s) I was looking for a job as a student assistant to earn some money and I ended up here.

I arrived here at a time, when most of the preparatory work had been completed. I was impressed and knew intuitively: this is a good place. I want to be involved here. In addition, I was pleased to meet young people and to see how professionally the exhibition was set up.

In today's speeches we repeatedly heard the idea of the "never again" and "against oblivion".

To me, as part of the third next generation to the Holocaust, there is another aspect of this exhibition that is especially important: the fresh start is stressed and focused on. This is to be found rarely in the culture of memory.

Yesterday I talked to a contemporary witness from Israel, who noticed precisely this.

His experience from Israel is, that the connection between the Germans and the Holocaust is still very dominant and present. And here he sees: there are a number of generations, second and third generations, who are on the move together, who want to keep the memory alive - initiated out of themselves.

To me this is a place where tikun olam takes place. Thank you to all of you, each of you, that we can experience this together - because of the unique story of each of us.