

## Rabbi Jona Simon from Oldenburg

When I moved to Oldenburg, where I live now, I realized a monument in the city, passing it twice daily, at least. When I examined it further, I realized it was meant to commemorate an event that took place in 1870/71. I have to admit, that it didn't mean a lot to me. So I asked Rabbi Google and he said it related to the last war the Germans won; against France in this case. This monument was put there 100 years before my birth.

What I am saying now might sound a bit bigheaded, but that was my thought: I even I don't know what that stands for, how would other people my age know? So I asked round about 20 people my age about that monument and that date. Nobody knew an answer to either question.

A further thought was, if that incident doesn't have any significance for the population, why don't remove it at once and make space for the outside setting of a nice cafe?

Shortly after I've been to Poland with the rabbinical conference and we went to Auschwitz as well. We had a meeting with the chairman of the facility and we asked him, if it wasn't him, the guy of „the place“ of the Shoa, who else could reach the youngsters? He replied that indeed it was tough to reach the people, because it was too far away for them, it all happened in the generation of their great-grandfathers. And since we all were rabbis, it could not be too hard to name all of our eight great-grandfathers by first-name. No one of us could: and this was only about our own family.

These two incidents lead me to think a lot about Memorials. To whom do they serve? What shall they express? Does a memorial say anything about the memorized? What is the purpose of such a thing anyway?

Remembering is an important deed in Judaism. In the daily morning prayer there is a section called „assara sichronot“, ten things we should remember or we shouldn't forget about.

7 positive things, that happened to us, 2 things, where we acted non correctly and 1 thing thing, we were attacked from outside.

The latter being cited often in the context of the Shoa: Remember what Amalek did to you...

In case, I've seen such comments on memorials for the murdered, especially in Israel. (Seeing Amalek as the personified Bad in the course of Jewish history).

In this case it's not about Jewish commemoration, since this memorial was put by non-Jews of this city. And not, as was the case for the 1870 memorial, for heroic reasons, but the contrary, for something that was committed here. On the memorial that was put here we read it was Nazi-terrorism that did it. But it's not terrorism as we understand it today, it was a state-incited action. And the Nazis weren't an entity that came from outside and then left. It were neighbours, colleagues, classmates, friends who, not suddenly but nonetheless surprisingly turned against neighbours, colleagues, classmates and friends. People that, even after 1945 lived in this city and maybe still do. Great-grandparents, Grandparents, parents.

That's why you, that are present now, have to tell your kids and grandkids about it. To not make it move further away from that younger generation. Tell them from this day, this memorial, the synagogue that was here before and the circumstances that led to its destruction. Call them tonight and tell them. Through telling the story it doesn't become history, it stays alive. And this is the only way that history, that this story won't repeat itself.