Shabbat shalom. And welcome to what you may already know is Refugee Shabbat, which is a program of HIAS. Tonight, we have the great merit to learn from CBE member and HIAS' "Senior Director of Community Engagement," the extraordinary Isabel Burton.

To start, I'm going to share a bit of Torah to help ground us in why we are participating in this evening. Then Isabel will tell us what's up. And then I'll share some CBE specific ways you can get involved in supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Brooklyn and beyond. I want to also thank our phenomenal leaders, Refugee Task Force chair, Bonnie Kerker, for all that you have done to get us to this weekend, Gale Kaufman and Karen Levenberg, the chairs of our democracy team, whose work has begun to dovetail quite meaningfully with our refugee task force, and to Student Rabbi Evan Traylor, who has shepherded some of the action steps you'll hear about later tonight.

So here we are in parshat Terumah and we find the instructions for how we are to build the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, to carry with us on our 40 year journey through the wilderness.

First, we receive the blueprint for building the Mishkan itself. And then, immediately next, we get very specific instructions on how to build the ark, the container, which will travel inside the Mishkan and will contain God's own words to us, written on the tablets forged atop Mount Sinai. It is the holiest center of holiness.

And God explains how to make it, saying that its covering, its top, should have two angels, one on either side, looking inward, their wings cast over it, in a protective posture. And "*ufneihem*," it says - the faces of the angels, shall be "*ish el achiv*" - shall face each other, as a man facing his brother. V*'no'ad'ti l'cha sham* - and God says: there, between those faces, is where I will meet you.

So the first thing to note is probably the most obvious - where we find God, unmitigated "godiness," is in the place where one face meets another face and recognizes there his brother, her sister, their sibling. That's holy space.

But why? To discern that, we have to plummet back into the worst moments in Mitzrayim - to the second to last plague, the plague of darkness. When this *choshech* descends, it's described as a darkness so thick you could touch it, such that: *Lo ra'u ish et achiv,* a person could not recognize the face of his brother, which is the same language hovering over the ark of the covenant. But here, this is understood as the deepest abyss. To look into the face of the other and not recognize that this person is your brother. No familiarity. No tingle of empathy for their groping in the dark. Whether for fear or anger or self-preservation, a face was just a face in the darkness. That is the plague.

And this, the instructions for the cover over the ark, this is the antidote, the resolution. The rejection and repair of that moment. A new agreement. To turn toward the face of the other. And to find there someone you might call your own sibling. Find there humanity.

This conversation tonight about what's happening for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and what we can do to help - is political. It's analytical. It's societal. It's ethical. It's about our well known call to care for the stranger since we were strangers in the land of Mitzrayim. But at its core, tonight is a conversation about humanity. Our ability to look another human being in the face and to see, with easy empathy, the pain, the hopes, the fear, and the heart of our own brother or sister or sibling. To embrace how our tradition guides us to see clearly how another person's suffering or their thriving or their safety is bound up with our own. And to know that when we can see another human being with that love, through that lens, that there we might find God's presence, unfettered.

It is my honor now to Introduce our speaker, Isabel Burton. At HIAS, Isabel overseas initiatives that enable the American Jewish community to act in support of refugees through public events, volunteer and educational opportunities, and grassroots advocacy. Prior to joining HIAS, Isabel worked in non-profit management, community organizing, and community development, both in congregational settings and in agencies in the US and UK. And Isabel is CBE family. Welcome.