

Sticks And Stones

*“Sticks and stones may break my bones
But names will never harm me.”*

False, false, we Jews have learned
We know graffiti, insults, sprayed over frightened souls
Names materialized into lethal weapons
Words turned into swords
Epithets into machetes.

“INYENSI,” so hateful a word
That Hutus used it to dehumanize trembling Tutsis
“Inyensi,” the name for cockroaches, vermin, and lice
This, the cursed word, translated
Into the extermination of 800,000 Tutsis
Within 100 days of Hutu predatory slaughter.

April 1945

Survivors of Buchenwald scrawled two words
Handmade signs: “Never Again,” a global pledge
Seared into penitent people of conscience
Never again, the slaughter of innocents
Locked behind the gates of Hell.

Done? Not yet.

The sacred oath violated 47 times since 1945
A litany of a civilizations’ broken covenant
“Never Again” transformed into “Ever Again”
Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur, The Congo
Children, mothers, fathers, raped, tortured, abducted
In front of one another’s eyes.

Yet, yet, with the same power
Words heal, repair, comfort
Therefore, one word, our word of honor
That we will grasp their hands in ours
Protecting, pulling and pushing into safe havens
Bread, books, medicine, hope.

Hearts demeaned — revived, resilient, dreaming
One day their own doctors, nurses, teachers, poets
On the eve of 5775:
May the children of courage and compassion
givers and receivers
Be a blessing so that both will thrive.

