MAY THEIR MEMORY BE A BLESSING

Rabbi Dan Moskovitz

In Judaism it is common practice that when learning that person has died the proper response is to say to the mourners, “May their memory be a blessing”. It’s a phrase intended to bring comfort to the mourners and bestow honor and dignity upon the deceased; but it’s also a reminder of the challenge that comes inherent with living.

To live a life worthy of being remember for blessing is to live a life that on balance does more good than harm; leaves the world better for you having lived in it. To be remember for blessing is to be worthy of your children and grandchildren re-telling your story, “*L’dor vdor* (from Generation to Generation)” as an example of how to lead an exemplary life.

The honorific “May their memory be a blessing” has been on my mind a lot lately as the United States grapples with what to do with statues and monuments to confederate soldiers and political leaders that still occupy public places of honor in the many states. The controversy is not limited to the US of course; in democracies around the world a new generation is pointing to the heroes of the past and questioning the blessing of their memory; some see primarily curse.