

# SYNAGOGUE KAF



כ

אבגדהו  
זחטיכל



HOMAGE TO BOB SLUTZKY

## THEM AND US

### KAF = CROWN AND HAND

#### A SYNAGOGUE FOR THEM AND FOR US



**THEY** are the fortunate few, the one per cent. Let's be generous, and give THEM ten per cent. Either way, the chances are you are one of **US**.

**FOR THEM:** plenty of room for the 10 to 12 people, including the privileged Rabbi, with comfortable seats near the *bimah* and comfortable seating elsewhere including Le Corbusier's *Gran Confort* and Mies' *de luxe* grand Barcelona Chairs, bathrooms and kitchen cooking wetbar fresh food facilities on every floor, a winter solarium and spa on the upper floor, and not the least a graceful covered platform for access from vehicles at the *port cochere*-- while there is only partial protection for access at US. Entry doors for THEM are unmarked and locked. If you don't have the code, or key, or secret guide, (or the right hair color) you won't find them and can't get in. The easiest way is to have your parents show you, when you are a child. Or better, your grandparents. Most of all, the view: arrangement of the elevators favors unlimited view along the vertical surfaces of the glass box between the two volumes, enabling THEM to see the sunset to the west and beautiful backlit scenery of the landscape to the north, while for US the elevators block these vertical glazing views. In addition, a skylight Crown of Light and Ner Tamid glows directly on THEM. This clerestory lighting affords THEM continuous unbroken views of the sky, the clouds, and the heavens.

For THEM all fittings and appointments are of the highest quality luxury materials and finish. Topaz translucent glazing, deep carpeting, rarest woods, and iridescent gilt surfaces are found throughout.



**FOR US:** the slightly damp and crowded atmosphere of mothers cooking, babies in playpens, noisy classes, and *mikveh*. Fluorescent fixtures provide limited illumination. More than 20 of US must fit in the same area as only 10 of THEM. On High Holidays even more of US are crowded onto additional folding chairs. Some of these are hard to reach, and the footing is precarious. Here the glass ceiling is a Glass Floor and dangerous to cross. The storage for 96 folding chairs is tight, but allows the main floor to be cleared for dances and other special occasions. A *te-vah* hovering over US during High Holidays allows THEM to make a "generous" gesture of equality (separate but equal) at least once a year. Rough wood finishes contrast with yellow paint applied to selected surfaces.

## KAF DIARY

The making of Synagogue KAF  
January to June 2015

On Wednesday, January 7, Guy Reed came to look at the situation and give us an estimate on mold and water damage remediation in our basement. We must do this, or will all suffer even more respiratory problems than we might now have. I feel guilty about David's nebulizer. He is allergic to mold! And wonder how all these years of me sitting in there, since the hideous work of the renovation 8 years ago, will have irrevocably damaged my lungs. Oy. But now it must be done. Alas, the papers in at least one of my file cabinets are rife with mildew and mold, and must be thrown out. These include my entire original set of files for the History of Imaginations, all those meticulous pages of notes and detailed drawings. Another failed project in my life. Maybe I can scan them before I throw them out. Probably I'll have to buy a new scanner for that.

But, anyway. So I brought my laptop and charging cable upstairs, out of the dungeon, and have been using it here in the kitchen. It is strange to have light in the space while I work. But... so, with not much else going on right now, I hauled out my first sketches on this synagogue, KAF, which succeeds my LAMED project, even though as a Hebrew letter Kaf precedes Lamed.

First thoughts on this project came about during the Occupy Wall Street days, the 99% vs the 1%-- one of my cousins once confiding in me that essentially "they", those 99% riff-raff, merit no sympathy. They should clean up their act, and get a job, sha na na. I was speechless, as I am when the *in* guys disdain the

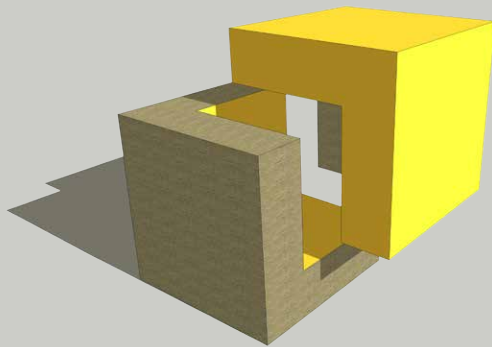
*out* guys. As I was when my urologist, a very nice man, as he was drawing blood from my elbow, tried to elicit my sympathy in his objections to the demeaning way doctors are now treated, he says, under Obamacare. But I could only think of both my grown sons, who for different reasons would be very threatened if this care was not available right now, at this very moment for both of them. And thus conceived of a Synagogue for **THEM** vs **US**. After all, there are the *kohanim*, the priests, the elect—and the large unwashed crowd, Israel, presumably the 99%. There are also the *Levi*, the in-betweeners... the maintenance guys who tend to the needs of the *kohanim* for their show for the rest... of US.

In this day and age, it is astonishing to me how many rich people I know feel entitled to ALL they have, and disdain any concept of sharing or mutual responsibility—charity, *caritas*, caring, compassion, empathy, "whatever."

So this project will be a bifurcated order, one place for US, one place for THEM. But in my own perverse manner, I identify of course with US, but for me THEM is the 1%, and I am in the great crowd-- huddled masses yearning to breathe free—yearning economically, maybe to get just enough ahead to be comfortable. (Which for us, for the first time since those few weeks when I was Dean just before I was fired in 2000, is now happening, due to combined incomes of both working parents.)

The odds are at least 99 to 1 that most of us are **US**.



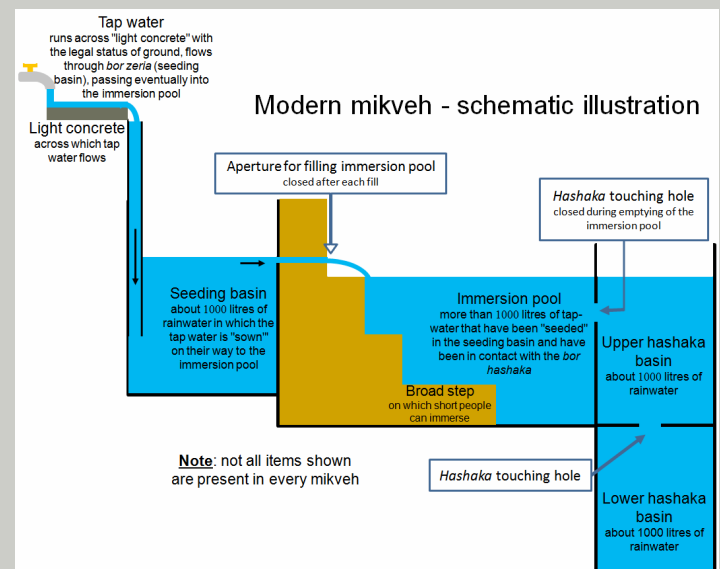


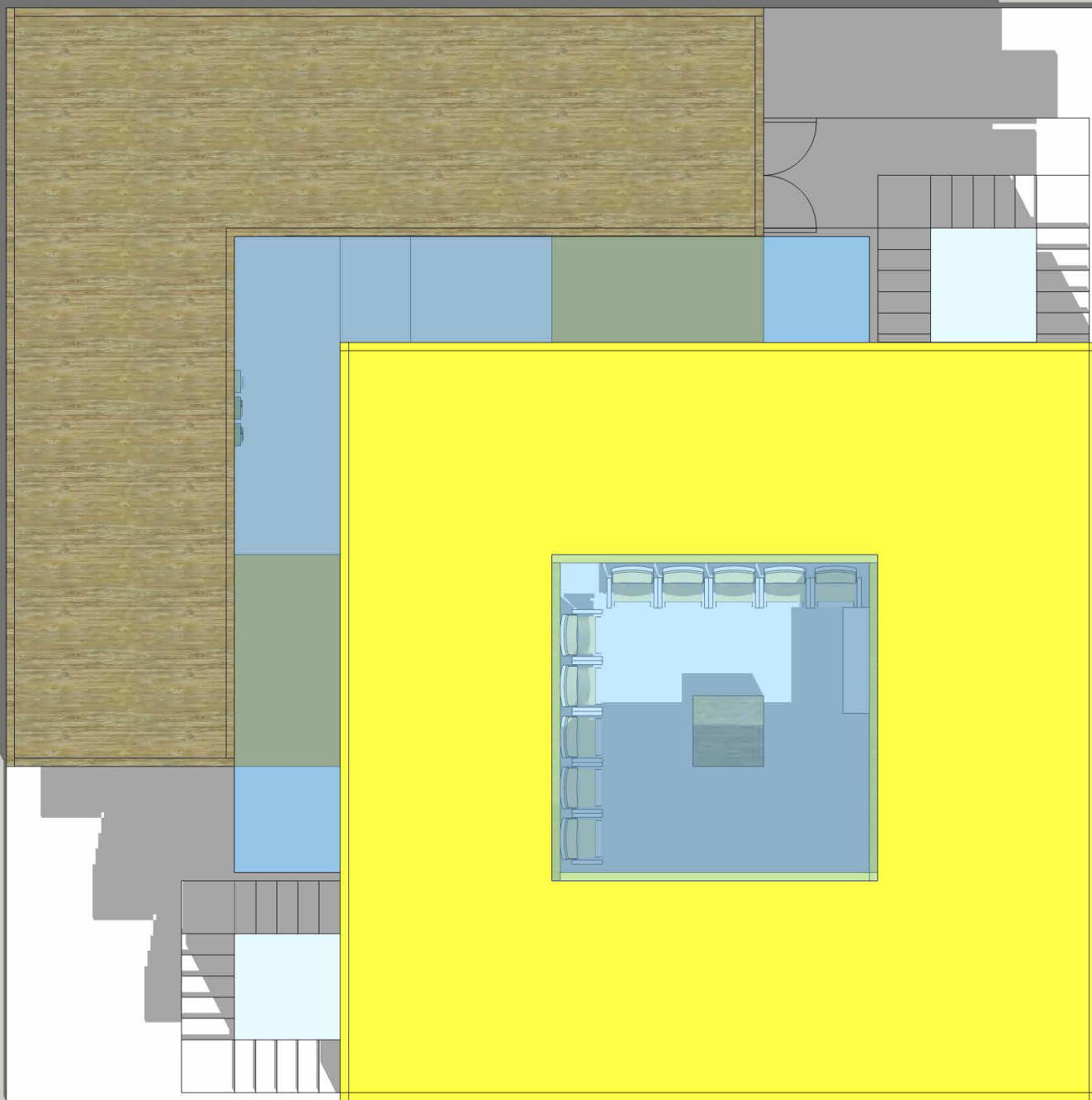
I made the first sketches on August 27 and 28, 2014. Looking at 2 cubes intersecting, each secure in its own zone, how they share the middle remains to be seen. Somehow the Boolean moves in one zone must be mirrored, or responded to, or somehow become variant on, the moves in the other zone. That's the game. Now to solve the mundane—how to get around, up and down, how to locate the Bimah, Ark, etc. How to identify each set. Right now, the US parts are painted generic “wood/lumber” as per the materials available just in SketchUp (no podium or 3D warehouse fanciness for me!) and the THEM parts are painted yellow, to stand for gold. The contrast is good and clear, and allows for some little tricks.

THEY will want all possible dice loaded their way. In architectural terms, this means THEY get the best exposure, direct sunlight, south, and early morning sun for the longest daytime, and elevation, given their “high” status in society. Which leaves US with the north side, afternoon sun (too late in the winter, too hot in the summer) and lowly groundling location. Latent sexism locates the feminine YIN dark, damp, moist, and messy, spaces with US including child care, teaching, cooking, and the Mikveh, ritual bath, mostly to “cleanse” and “re-purify” menstrual women, here designed to meet rigorous halachic standards.

On the other hand, maybe the rich get the ground and the poor get the top, as in Rio's favelas, as in palazzos and villas and estates, where the servants sleep in the attic. *Upstairs Downstairs. Downton Abbey*. That would be the Orthodox version, with the women up above, in the balcony, to keep evil carnal thoughts and distractions away from the pious (and horny!) *yeshivabuchas* in the orchestra seats. But think of all those ever-pregnant girls toiling to carry that extra weight up all those extra stairs.

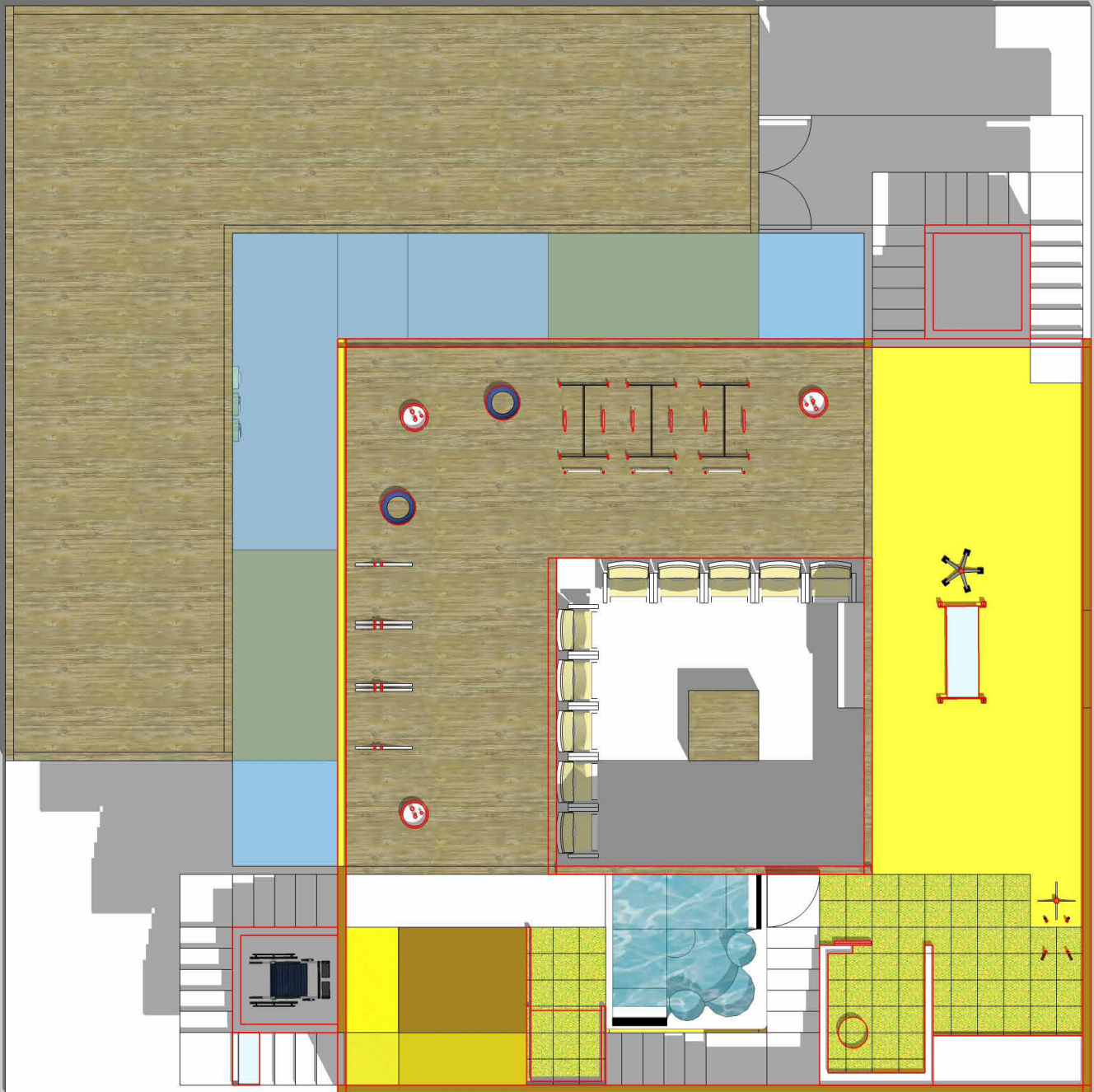
No, the common and commercial conception today is that UP is GOOD and DOWN is BAD. For example, the premium for penthouses. So the upper volume is the place for THEM, who get the Bimah and Ark and Ten Seats for the elect to conduct services in comfort, crowned by a skylight and solar power perimeter lighting for a halo of Eternal Light. THEY have their own private entry, and can be whisked upstairs in their private elevator. Of course the Rabbi's office is located with THEM. The top level is a place of *luxe calme et volupte*, with massage tables, solarium, and spa bath.





PLAN ROOF





PLAN + 5









PLAN + 3



PLAN + 2



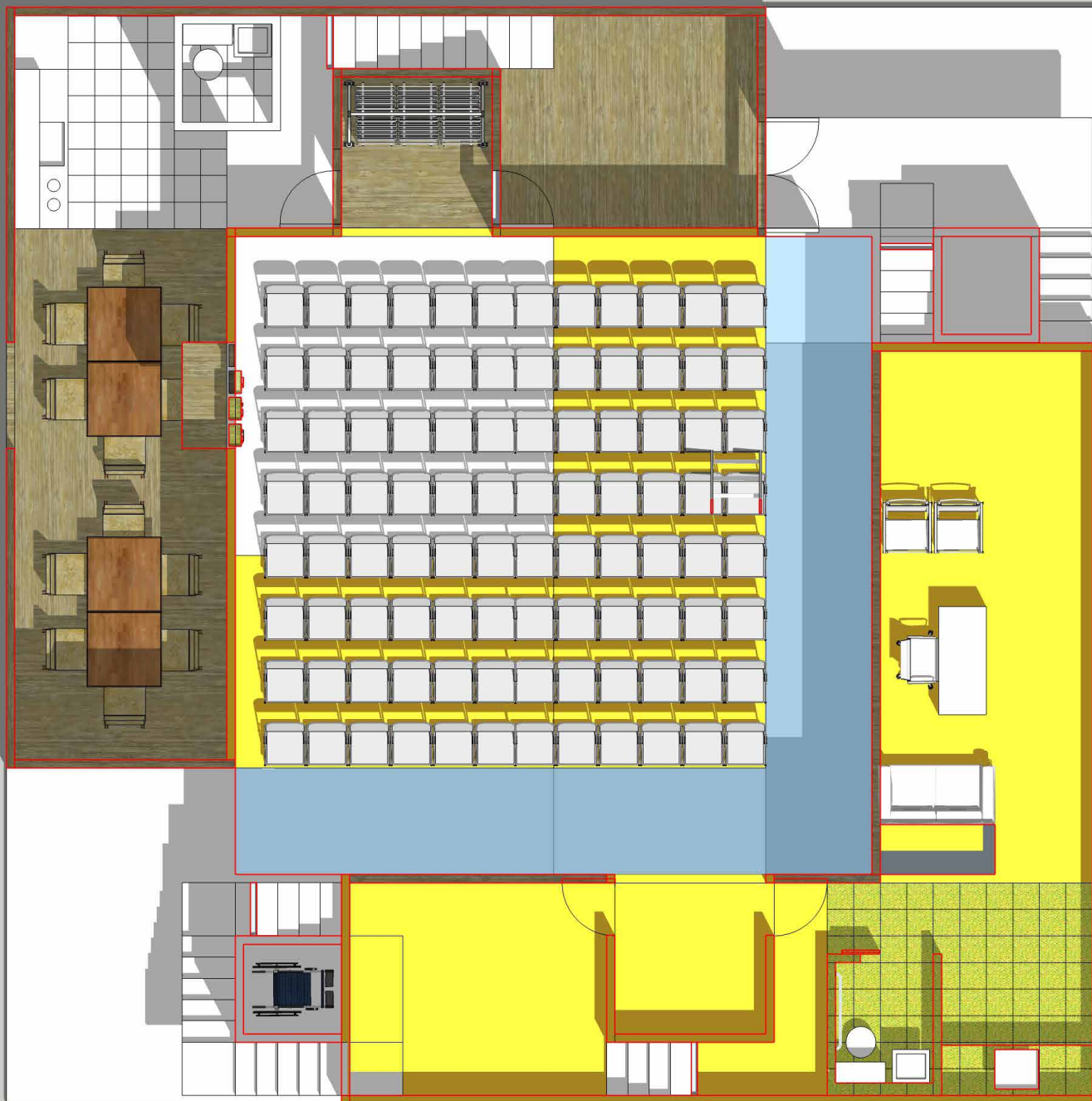
S entry is for THEM  
NE entry is for US

An emergency exit  
on the ground floor  
to the south is near  
the entry for THEM,  
but is not marked,  
and not really for US

PLAN + 1







HIGH HOLIDAYS FOLDING CHAIRS FOR 96 OF US    PLAN + 2





HIGH HOLIDAYS PLUSH SEATS FOR 10 OF THEM

PLAN + 4

## KAF: CROWN AND PALM

### HAND BELOW

The *name* KAF in Hebrew means bent, for the letter derives its name from its bent shape. Many objects of a bent shape are called KAF, including a spoon, the palm on the hand, and the sole of the foot. as well as palm branches and the hip socket-- all containers, vessels to hold what is given.



The literal meaning of the *letter* Kaf is "palm", the place in the body where potential is actualized (could this mean by workers, if paid, or servant or slave if not?) -- this awareness is reflected in the custom of placing one palm on the other when awakening. The palm turned upward becomes the vessel to receive Divine blessing and sustenance.

The Havdalah blessing at the conclusion of the Sabbath and festivals refers to the transition from the Sabbath holiness to weekdays. To indicate the difference between light and shadow, one opens and closes his hand near the candle light. The open hand symbolizes the work-free rest of the outgoing Sabbath, while the closed hand indicates a readiness for acquisition and action, denoting a readiness to return to the world of work and accomplishment.

Thus Kaf has a dual symbolism. It stands for the palm of the hand serving as a container and at the same time as the measure of what it holds.

### CROWN ABOVE

Kaf is also the root of the Hebrew word *kipah* (etymologically the root of the word "cap" in English), the *yarmulke* or skullcap. Of course the most elaborate cap for the head is a crown-- headpiece for the most privileged. In Hebrew, crown is *keter*, which also begins with Kaf.

The Talmud suggests there are the three crowns: the priesthood, kingship, and Torah. But there is also a 4th crown superior to the others-- the crown of a good name, perhaps another way to speak of *compassion*. Kaf may be the symbol of crowning accomplishment, but in this day and age, focussing on success alone is fraught with political and social implication.

### SUBJUGATION

A palm turned downward suggests among other things, subjugation. Placing palm on palm is an act and sign of subjugation, similar to the act of bowing before a king. Kaf as a *verb* means "to subdue" or "coerce." The Torah refers to all productive labor as "the toil of the palms." "The toil of your palms you shall eat, happy are you and goodness is yours."

As a negative force, history is full of conflict between nations in struggle over power (the *keter* of the Kaf). Some believe that ultimately this negative, egocentric force will be converted to good when the Messiah will selflessly use the power of the Kaf to "force" all people to abide by the Divine statutes of Torah.

Meantime, we would do well to watch out for the bifurcation of Crown and palm-- of blessing and subjugation, of THEM and US.



The **CROWN** of King George XII of Georgia took the form of a circlet surmounted by ornaments and eight arches. A globe surmounted by a cross rested on the top of the crown. The crown is made of gold and decorated with 145 diamonds, 58 rubies, 24 emeralds and 16 amethysts-- and the lives of how many miserable and unnecessarily suffering serfs?



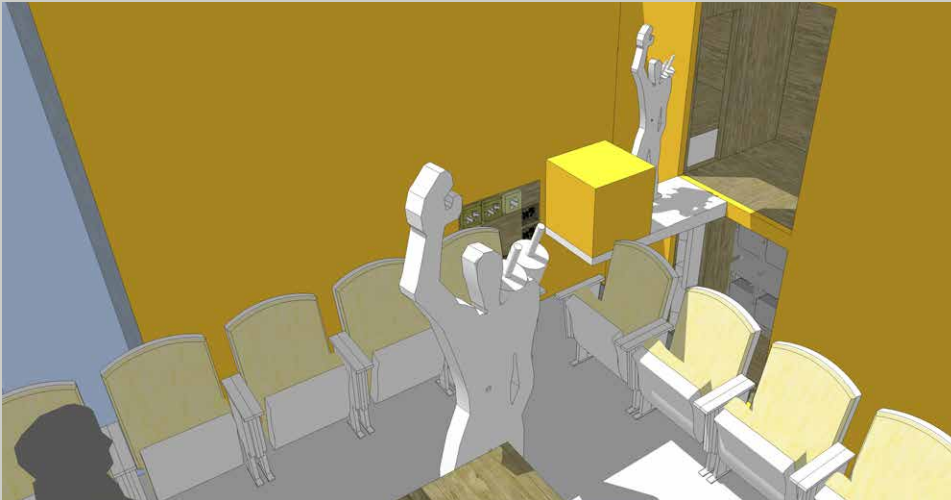
Only six steps on **THE LADDER OF SUCCESS** separate US and THEM. A *bimah* may not be more than six steps above the congregation. Thus those who are called upon to take part in the service, will not be elevated above US any more than necessary. Here that rule has been stretched, literally. The rungs are far apart-- it's a steep (and dangerous, no railings) climb to get up there, but hard work and courage is the nature of success-- unless of course you know someone or are related, in which case the doors to THEM will open for you and an easy staircase, even an elevator, may whisk you up to the *Bimah*. "No problem, our pleasure" says THEM.



The **TEN COMMANDMENTS** distinguish between privilege (the first 5 commandments) and obligation (the last 5 commandments.) Moses destroyed the first tablets when he descended from Mount Sinai and saw the Children of Israel worshipping the Golden Calf. Like the Rose Windows of the great cathedrals, this version of the Ten Commandments is a wheel-- of fortune.

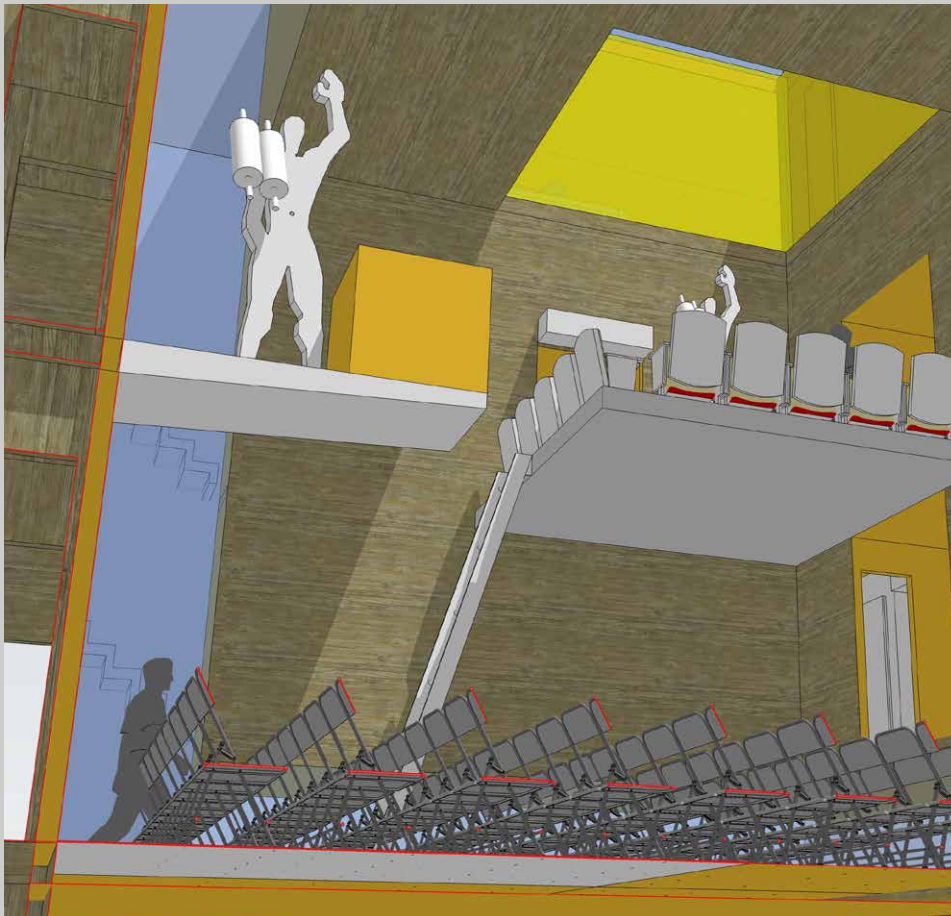
Le Corbusier called his **OPEN HAND** a sign of "peace and reconciliation. It is open to give and open to receive." No doubt influenced by Gandhi, it represents the exchange of ideas. The Open Hand constructed in the Indian capital of Chandigarh is a democratic symbol of giving, reminding elected representatives that they are granted the privilege of giving good government in return for the trust placed in them.





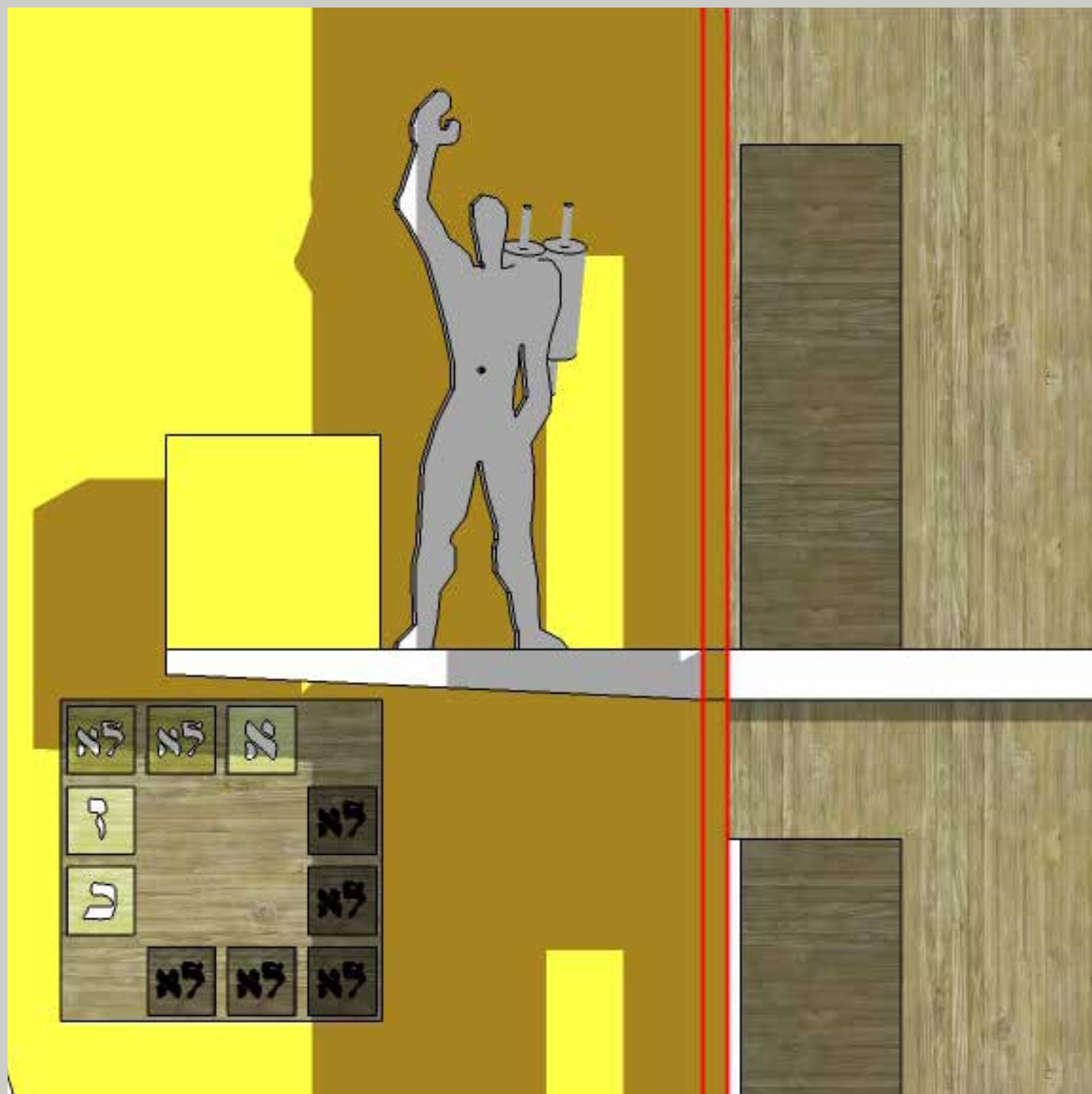
## TEVAH

Judaism reached Kerala India 3000 years ago during the time of King Solomon. The Paradesi Synagogue, oldest synagogue in India, had 3 classes of members. White Jews, descendants of Sephardim from Spain and Holland, were full members. Black or Malabari Jews, the original settlers (Solomon! Sheba!), could worship but were denied full membership. Meshuchrarim, freed slaves and their descendants brought by the Sephardim, had no communal rights or synagogue of their own and sat on the floor or steps outside.



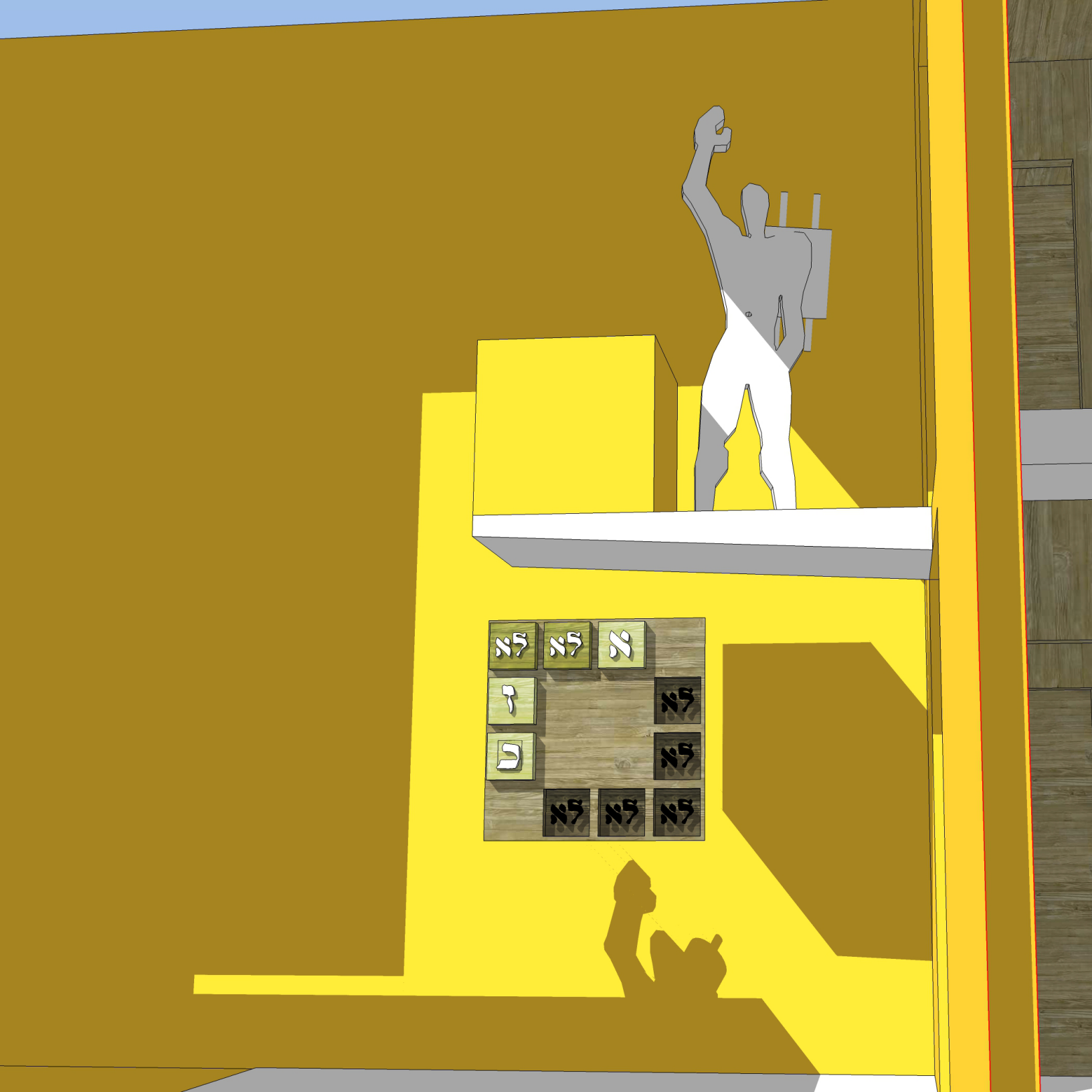
These Malabar synagogues sometimes had an extra *bimah* (the raised platform where the service is led and Torah read) called a **TEVAH**. A variation of the common Sephardic tradition, the second *tevah* was used on holidays and special occasions and was located on the gallery level, adjacent to the space provided for women, overlooking the sanctuary below. Thus, sometimes women are closest to the point where the religious service is being led.

In Synagogue KAF, the *tevah* is a retractable cantilevered platform and lectern that can be extended from the interior north wall of the Sanctuary, coming from US. This *tevah* will be brought out and become active especially during the High Holidays-- *Rosh Ha Shanah* and *Yom Kippur*. The leader of the service will be closer, but not completely equal in elevation to THEM, but certainly higher than US. When extended, the *tevah* will overshadow the Ten Commandments while focussing attention on them.









NO

NO

YES

RIDDLE:

HOW TO PUT  
10 THINGS  
IN A SQUARE?

YES

NO NO NO NO NO  
black shadow  
5 **LO** = **NO** FOR **US**

NO

*Am I my brother's keeper?*

YES

*Am I my brother's keeper?*

NO

White 2 **NO** but not for **THEM**.  
Who is blessed? *I am the Lord.*  
YES O O YES YES

ANSWER:

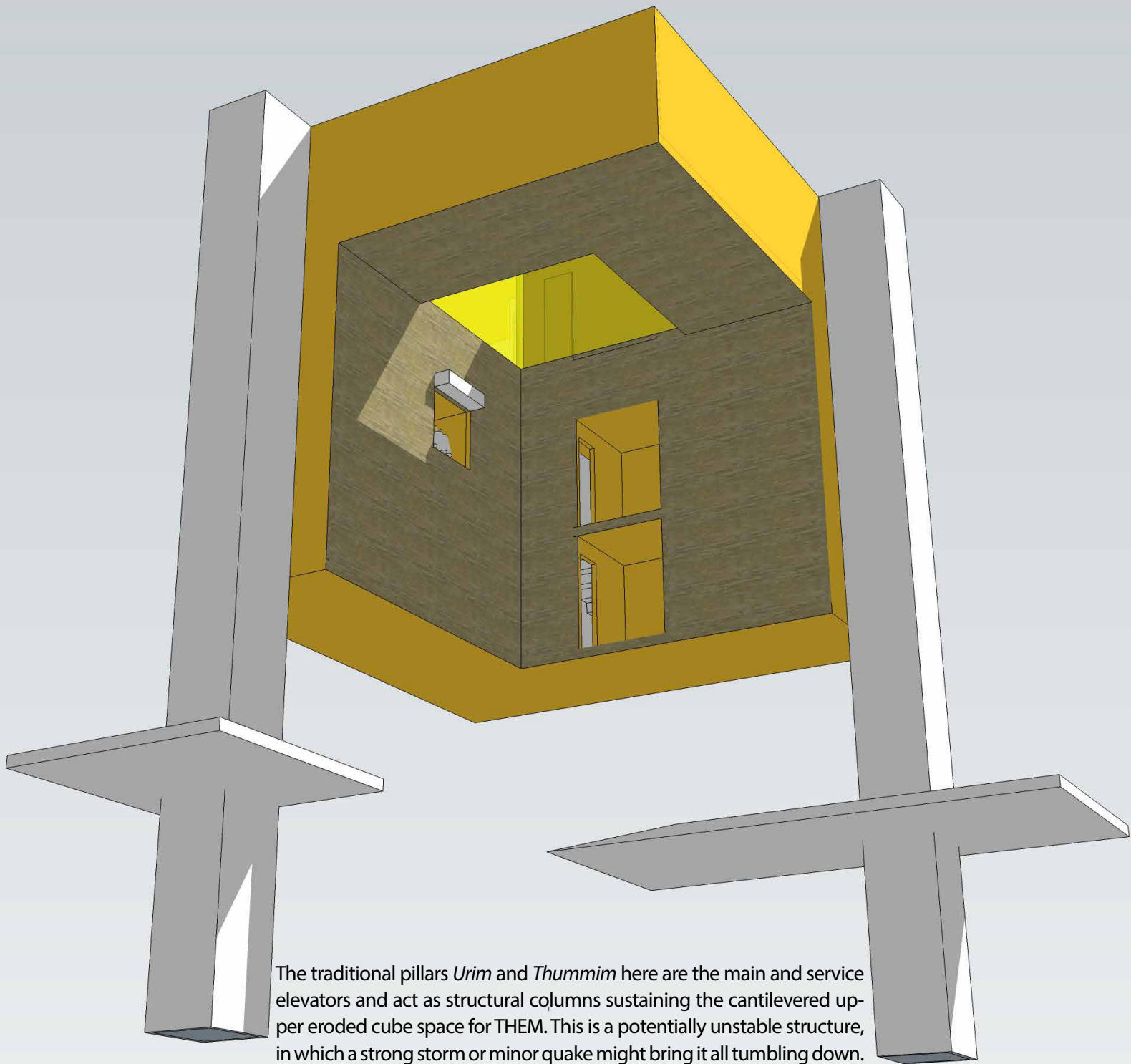
OVERLAP TWO  
NINE-SQUARES  
**THEM** AND **US**  
AND TWO UN

NO

NO

NO





The traditional pillars *Urim* and *Thummim* here are the main and service elevators and act as structural columns sustaining the cantilevered upper eroded cube space for THEM. This is a potentially unstable structure, in which a strong storm or minor quake might bring it all tumbling down.



## PROGRAM

### THEM

Kohanim = 10 + 2  
Bimah and Ark  
Upholstered Seating  
Rabbi's Office  
Library-Study  
Catered Food Service  
Dining on each floor  
Wet bars and Lounges  
Luxury wc's  
Massage lounge  
Whirlpool spa  
Sunbath solarium  
Private Entry  
Private Lift

### US

Israel = 90  
playpen  
baby and daycare  
kitchen snacks  
mikveh  
toilet coat closet  
laundry janitor  
classroom  
folding chairs  
service and storage  
cots for workers  
service elevator



The Ark holds 4 Torah scrolls and is “naturally” located with THEM. One Torah is lent to US for use on the Tevah during the High Holidays and returned to the Ark via the service stairs or elevator, passing through the Rabbi's office for control and security. The holder, before returning to US, may be checked for contraband. The Eternal Light, *Ner Tamid*, is the skylight above the Bimah, which is illuminated for THEM at night by a halo ring of glowing incandescence powered by photovoltaics on the roof.



**DIVINE RIGHT**

# NOBLESSE OBLIGE







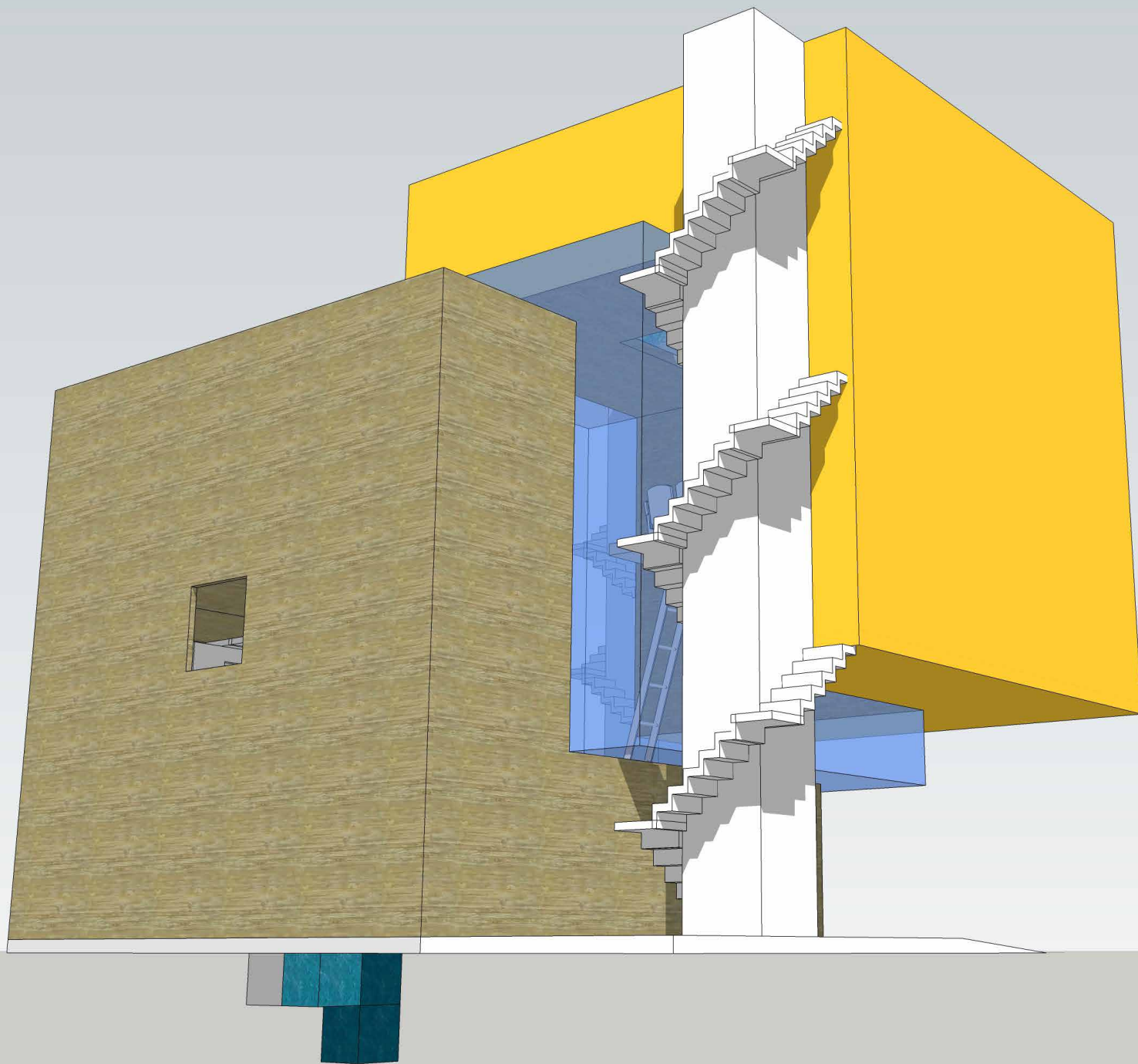




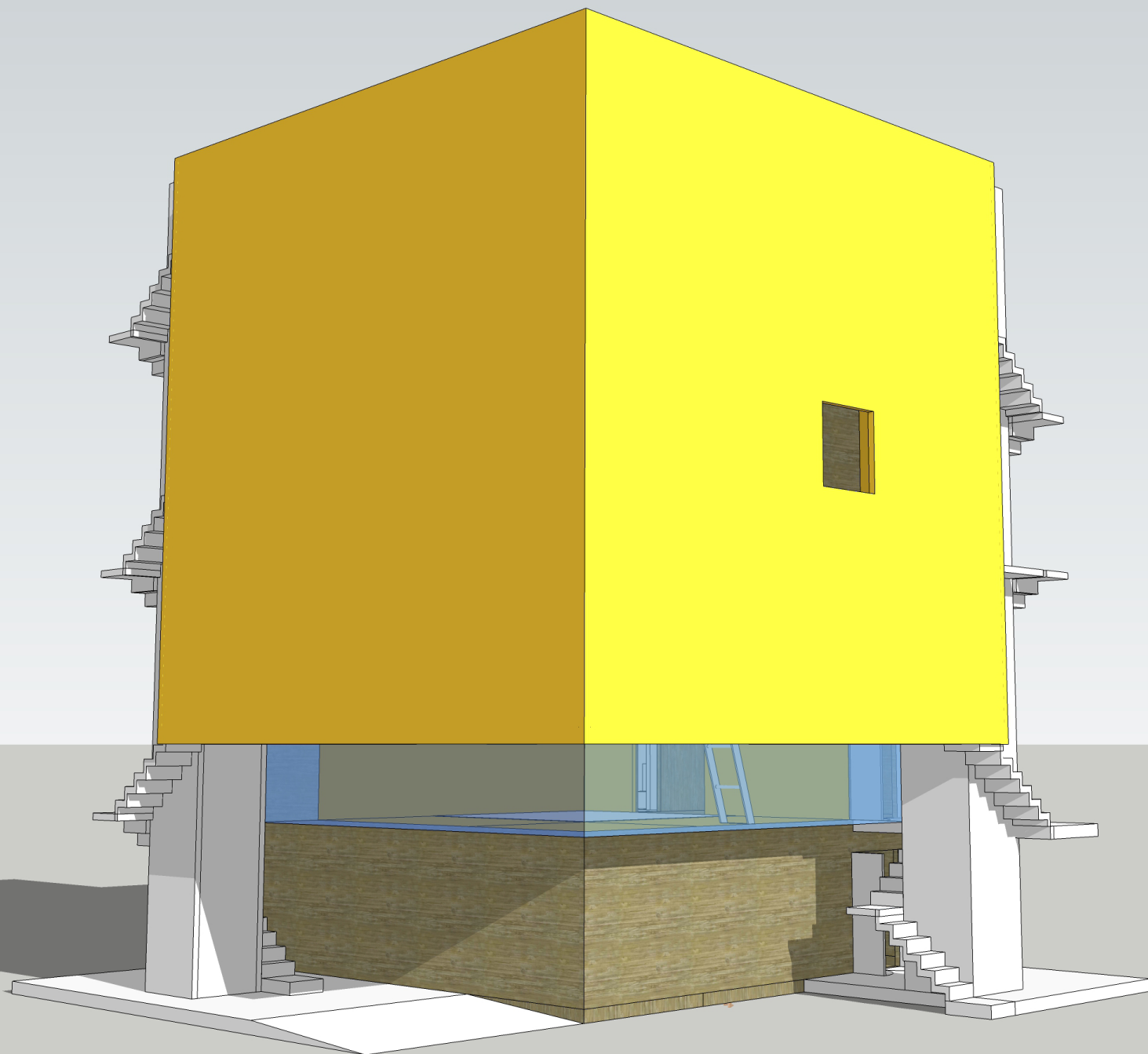
*luxe calme et volupte*

women's work

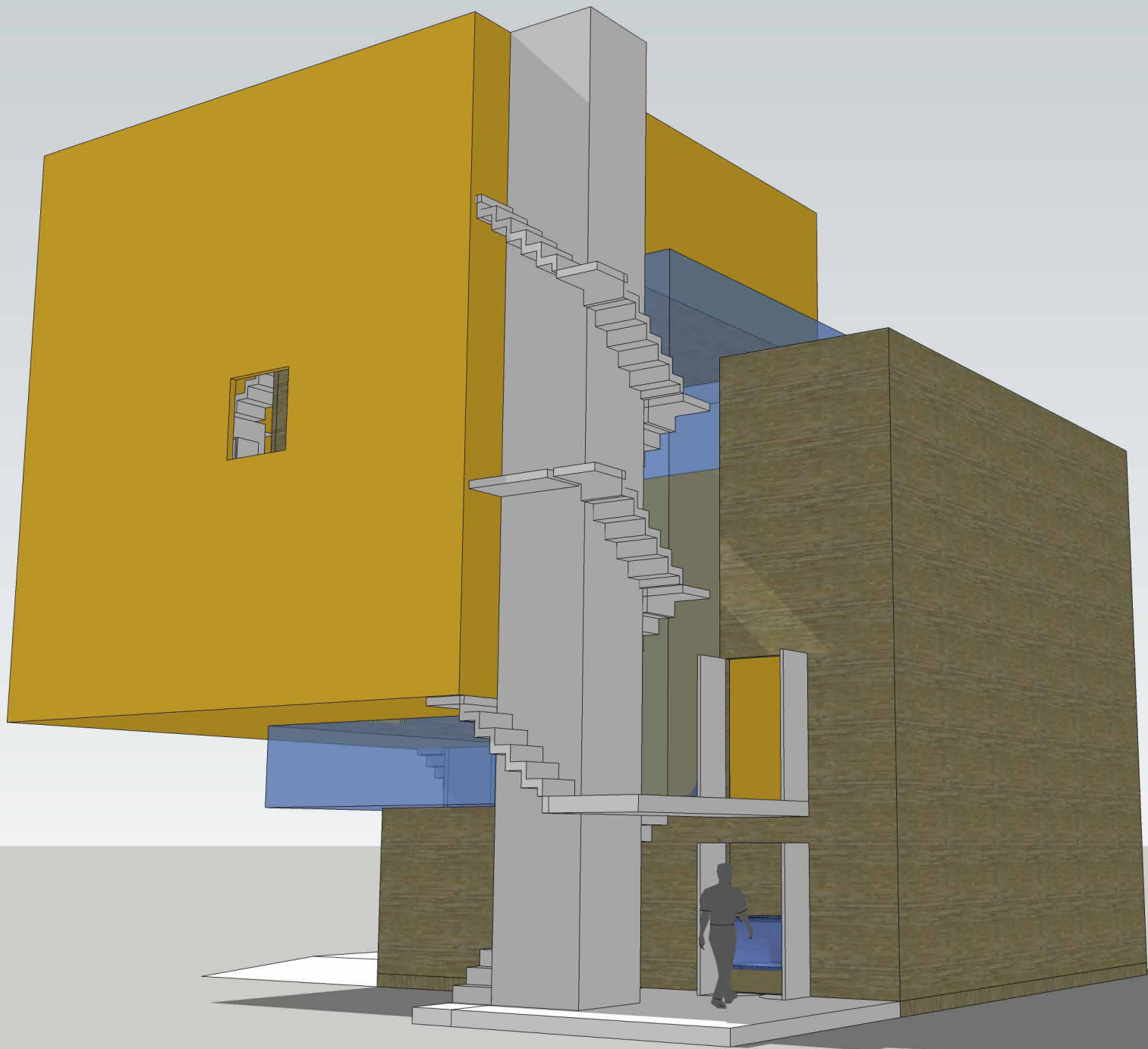




MAIN ENTRY

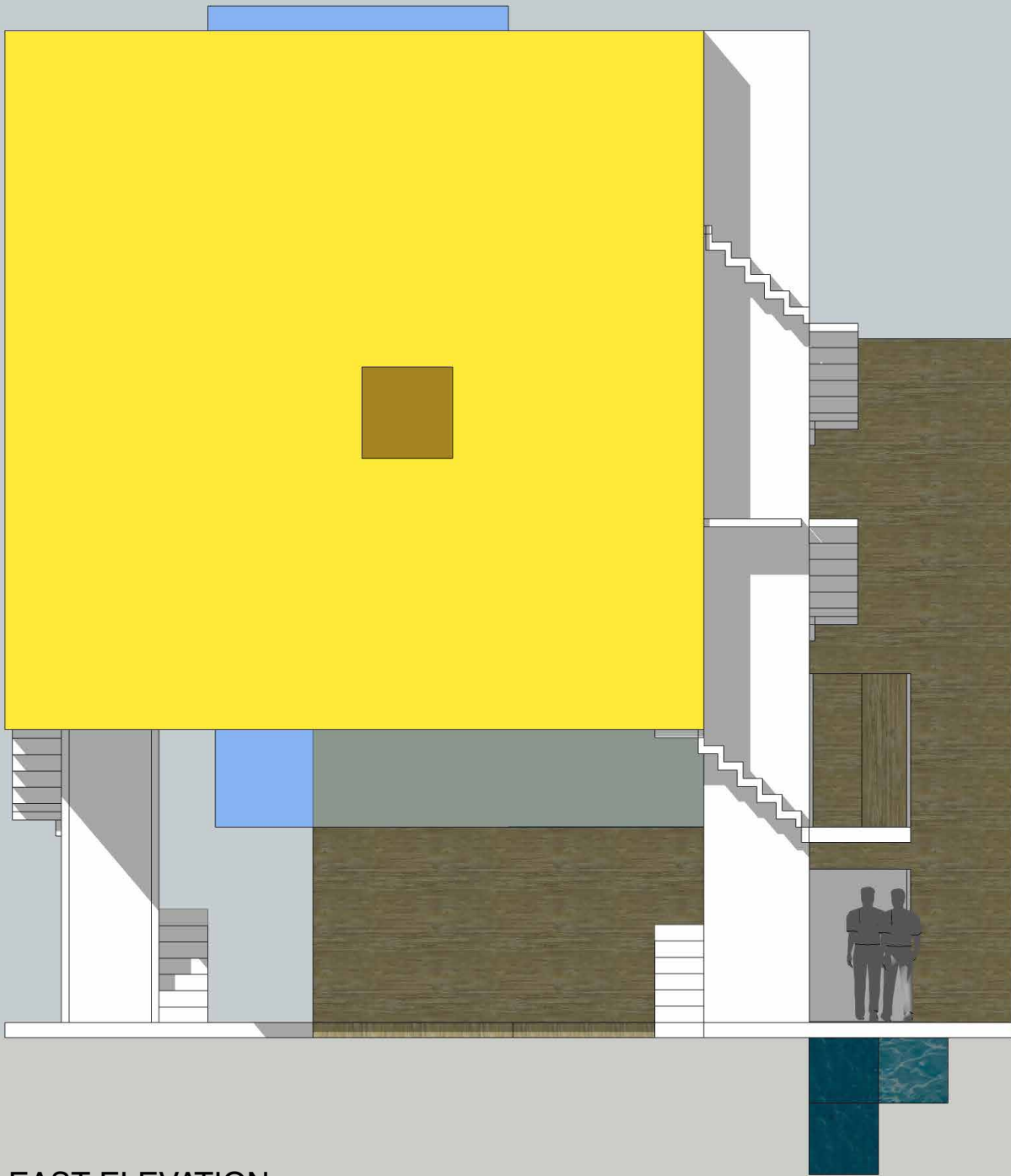


THE GOLDEN CALF



POVERTY





EAST ELEVATION



SECTION TO WEST



SECTION TO WEST Ladder Of Success And Tevah

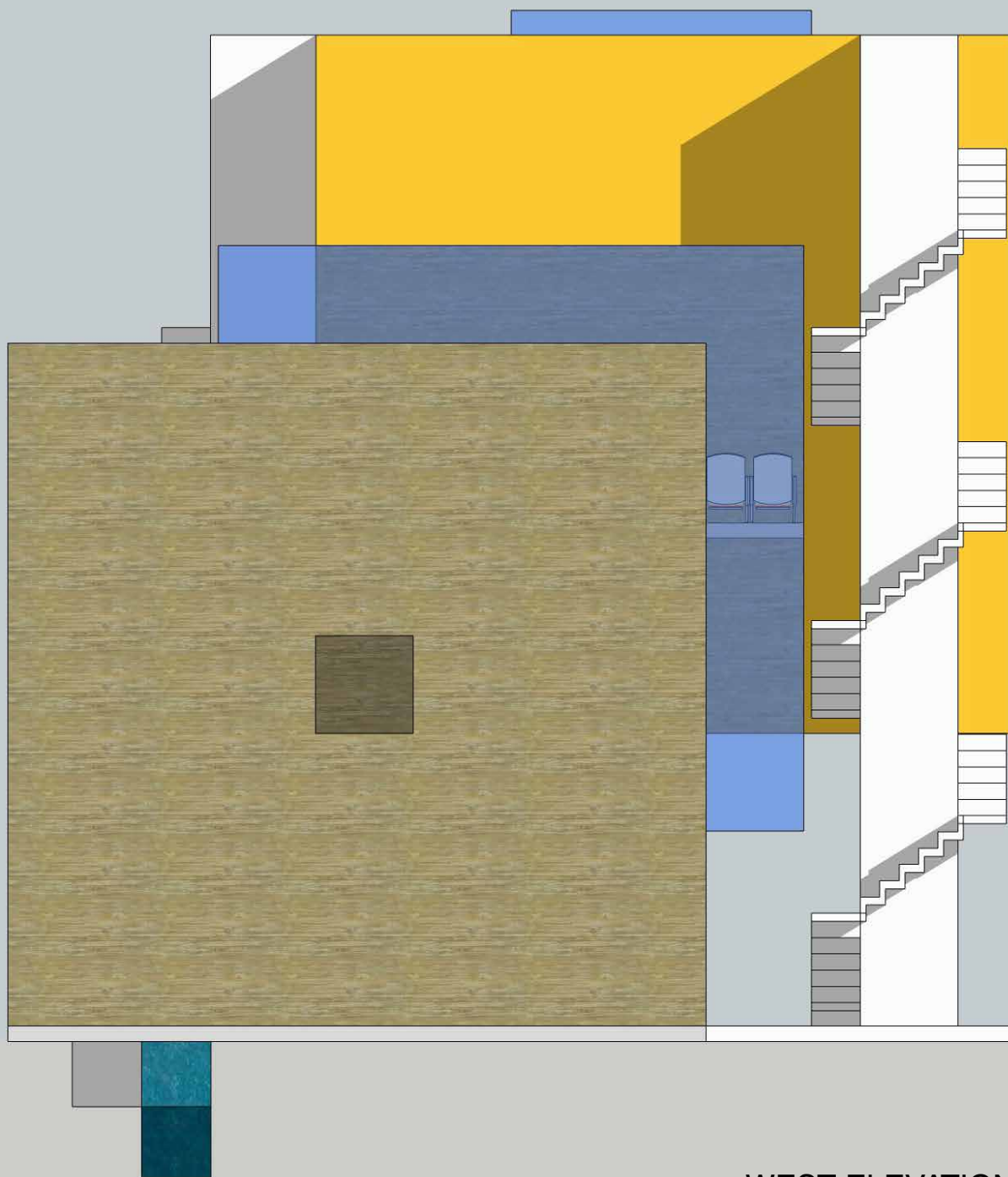


NORTH ELEVATION

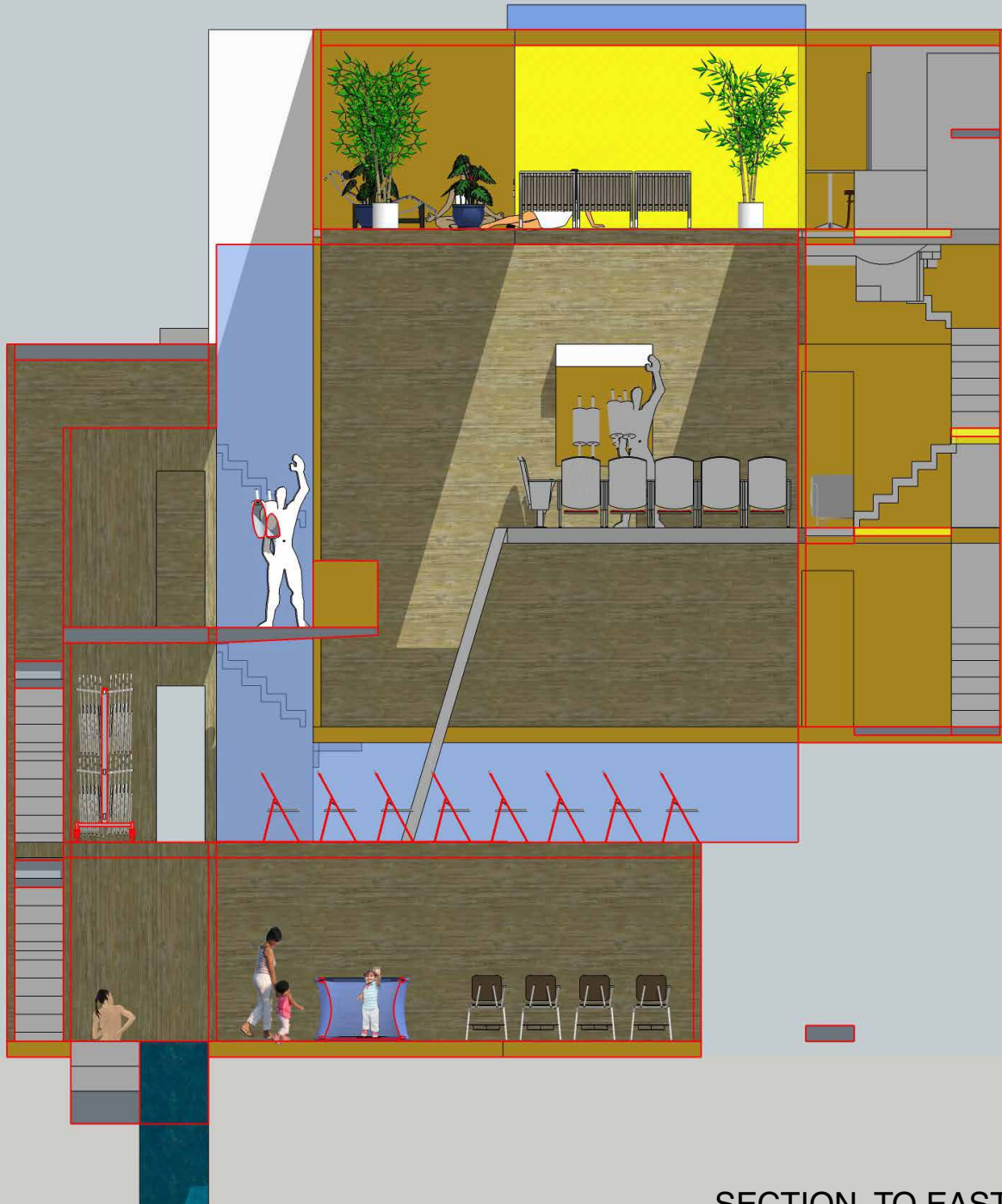




SECTION TO SOUTH



WEST ELEVATION



SECTION TO EAST



SOUTH ELEVATION

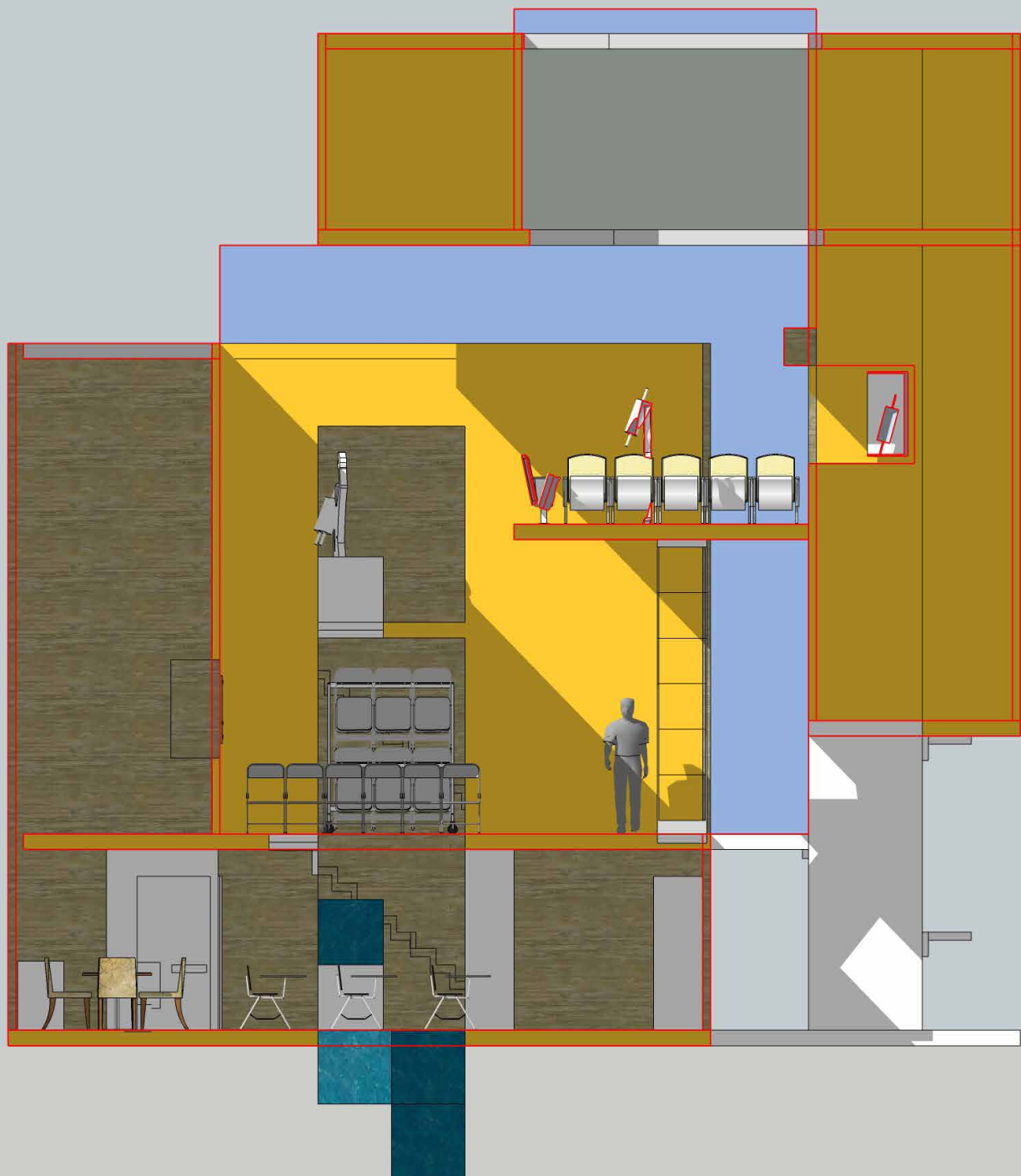




SECTION TO NORTH



PRELIMINARY STUDIES





In Jewish tradition, the new day starts at sunset, not sunrise. The moment of the new day is a time of hope, of promise, and of possibility. So here the view of the new day is for **THEM**, not for US.





*Jazz is the culture of America.* Duke Ellington

*thank you Bob*



*thank you Bob*

LUSH  
LIGHT  
PRESS  
© 2015



A WILDCAT XEROX PRESS IMPRINT    FOR CHARLIE FRIEDMAN

