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To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: FW: One person's response to Communal fear 3.26.20
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 26, 2020 11:46 AM
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Subject: One person's response to Communal fear 3.26.20

(written earlier this morning but only able to send now)

Here is the deal. These daily musings are really a result of my commitment to making two walks a day. My morning routine has changed –I know get up and the first thing I do is walk for 40 minutes and begin the walk by asking myself a question to think about during the walk. I then ruminate about the question, come home-quickly daven(pray) and then sit down to write. Whatever I write, I do so stream of consciousness style and don't go back to edit the piece. Then I put your names in BCC and send it out. So far no one has asked to be removed from the list. People have asked to be added. But just to clarify—this has nothing to do with any institution or organization or politician. These thoughts are “owned by me” and are just one person's response to communal fear. Today, I had to deviate the writing piece—as I had a meeting over Zoom that began at 8. Another city sharing their amazing ability to adapt and to continue to serve. When this is all over—I hope folks will take the time to salute those who day in and day out in city and county, state and federal offices making sure that the funds that are available are routed appropriately and that the services that people rely upon are still accessible. Enough Introduction.

Today the question I asked myself was as I began my walk was this: “Where did I learn how to be an optimist? (Ok, tinted with a dash of —sometimes more but never overwhelming—pessimism). There are many answers including my parents' own story of pushing through adversity at several critical times in their lives as kids and as adults and their continued messaging. But having framed the question about “learning optimism, I focused more on teachers or moments in a classroom that reminded me who I was and who I should aspiring to be. And I suddenly was transported back to a classroom in the seminary where Dr. Gerson D Cohen(zl) gave a one-time lecture to our class. For those who don't know who he was here is a thumbnail introduction—the Chancellor of our Seminary, a noted historian, a brilliant thinker, a courageous leader). In any event, Dr. Cohen at this time was still functioning as our chancellor even though his body was being ravaged by a muscle degenerative disease that would end his life all too prematurely. After this phenomenal lecture on Freud and Herzl who shared a neighborhood in Vienna at one point, he said he would answer a few general questions. Someone asked if he wished he had lived in Cordoba since he wrote so much about the height of Jewish Spanish presence marked by Cordoba, he turned to this individual and said—“God forbid-if I had lived in Cordoba, I would have died within months.” And then in his perfect and lyrical Hebrew shared with us a message of living with hope and optimism that ended by quoting Jeremiah, he reminded us that on the verge of exile Jeremiah prophesied that once again “fields will be bought, deeds will be signed, sealed and witnessed in the territory of Benjamin and in

Jerusalem”

Our peoples’ cultural DNA is infused with those images and that construct. So today as I was walking, feeling exiled from friends and family and co-workers and life in general, I heard Gerson Cohen in my ears reminding us that it is a blessing to be alive in this moment of human history and more than that that we are to embrace hope and optimism as virtues. And then I thought about two people yesterday who shared with me why that has to be true not just for “us”(particular us), but for all of us(universal us) who are facing this crisis together. One is my co-worker who blasted us across our Microsoft teams chat that she and her spouse are still going to be able to close on their FIRST home ever [on April 23](#). No backing down, no backing out, but a belief that speaks to the importance of embracing optimism as a living value that illumines the path of life. And then another person who I have come to really like and appreciate and who serves a part of the districts business community with dedication and excellence let me know that she had just become a grandmother for the first time. The hospital had suggested to her daughter that she be induced a little early so that it would free space as the virus took its toll on hospital and physicians all around her. She agreed and a silver lining in the dark clouds was the birth of a precious and gorgeous child. These new parents’ will face the challenge that all of us are facing through the eyes of this newborn-- needing to reassure him of the security and of the love that will surround him on his journey in life. Bringing a child into this world is the most optimistic decision that a person can choose to make. (the interesting statistic will be births 9 and 10 months from now). We make the decision to have a child knowing there are no guarantees about the life the child will live or the world they will face—and still people make that decision.

Jeremiah in responding to an impending exile asked people to buy land in Anatot-in the land of Israel. He taught us then what needs to be the mantra for us today—return and restoration is always possible. Embrace it. I suggest we all embrace a dose of optimism and ask ourselves what optimistic act we will undertake today. Morris

Sent by my iPad