

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: Fwd: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 9.29.30
Date: Tuesday, September 29, 2020 10:15:06 AM

Begin forwarded message:

From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Subject: Fwd: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 9.29.30
Date: September 29, 2020 at 9:09:01 AM EDT
To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>

Perhaps 3rd time a charm

Sent by my iPad

Sent by my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Morris <mojo210al@GMAIL.COM>
Date: September 29, 2020 at 8:45:03 AM EDT
To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 9.29.30

Delta CMH-MSP Census. 28 people. 20 more than MSP-CMH on Sunday

Yom Kippur has come and gone, and with it the end of the start of 5781 and its glorious High Holidays. I was privileged to be a part of a wonderful SHUL community that worked hard to make yontiff as meaningful as possible. I am sure that this was true of every synagogue across the country. Agudas Achim, Bexley, Ohio, is undergoing a year of transition as it seeks its next rabbinic leader. It has a tremendous bench, lovely people, a heimish sense of self- and all it needs is a rabbi who sees this opportunity as a career and not a job. Someone who understands that the calling of the rabbinate means that living with the sense of 24/7 is an unfortunate side effect of the gifts that are yours as a result. If only I was 10 years younger. But I Digress....

In addition to being the rabbi for this lovely SHUL, I took this

opportunity in February because I figured it was going to be one way that we could spend yontiff with some family. Our grandson and his parents, and our machatunim, live in Bexley and this would be a bonus to the job which I would be doing. Then came Covid-19 and our youngest daughter and her husband deciding to move to Columbus as well for grad school. So in the midst of the pandemic, suddenly yontiff would be an opportunity to spend time with even more family. And Rosh Hashana was just that. We had a lovely time together, and while the pain of not being with our middle daughter was evident throughout, she was able to “be with us” at shul-davenning from New York while “sitting” next to Phyllis and her sibs. Indeed, being with the grandson, seeing him make sense of having all 4 grandparents together was a treat in and of itself. The only downside-the drive both ways.

It would not be possible to drive for Yom Kippur. So I flew- and in the process discovered what it meant to live with a form of “Hansen’s Disease.” As a result of having flown, the understandable nervousness on my family’s part was evident. Suddenly the open doors we experienced with having driven in for RH, was now met with a type of Neilah- a closing of those doors. I had already decided to stay in an otherwise Empty Bed and Breakfast over yontiff because no one was totally comfortable with me staying with them. Our daughter, who is attending class on campus, was kind enough to pick me up- as long as I wore my mask and shield. In fact, they were the most comfortable in having me inside their home—and the pre-fast dinner (salmon and stuffed mushrooms) and the break fast of blintz soufflé and tuna fish salad were perfect. But both my own discomfort of having flown and my status as a modern victim of potential need for isolation kept me from fully enjoying and being comfortable inside their home. During the break, I walked over to my grandson’s home and it was so great to see him. I guess he had even seen me being a rabbi. On Kol Nidre, I mentioned how his great-great-great grandfather had actually been a founder of the very SHUL I was leading for yontiff. In addition, his own grandfather had grown up in that SHUL as a young boy and his mother, our grandson’s great grandmother is one of the two people for whom he is named. In any event, he could have cared less. What he wanted to do was read a book with me. But he was unsure if he needed the IPAD or not since that is how he normally gets his books with his Saba and mostly with his Savta. He did ask where she was, and maybe in his mind if he opened up an IPAD, she would have been there. We sat on their outside porch, their understandable discomfort of me being in their house was evident. Walking back to shul before the ending services-in rain no less- I walked past my machatunim’s home. Luckily they were on their porch and so I got to visit over Yom Kippur with all 7 of the folks I know in Columbus. That made the time there a blessing within a blessing.

What I really kept thinking about, however, was Stanley Stein nee

Sidney Levynson(zl). Perhaps one of the greatest fighters for inclusion inside America, his is relatively unknown. This summer, in reading about the “Leprosarium” known as Carville that served people with Hansen’s disease into the 21st century, I stumbled upon one of my newest heroes. There is too much to say about Stanley, but what I do want to say is that his life-long fight against the stigmatized response that uneducated people had towards Hansen’s Disease is a powerful testament to the human spirit and to the soul with which he was born. One day when you have time, google STARS, the publication he began in the 1930’s and sustained until his death in 1967-while living in Carville and being totally blind. While there was little reason to isolate folks with Hansen’s disease, save for the biblical wrath for the disease of Tzora’at to which it was assumed to be the same, the need for isolation for people potentially exposed to Covid-19 is indeed real. If you need any validation of that truth, look at the numbers in America or tragically in Israel. And yet, in that isolation and in the need for 14 days of symptom free existence before fully returning to normal society again, the shades of the biblical mandates and the way that people with Hansen’s disease were treated even towards the end of the 20th Century is now understood for many of us as we travel on planes or are exposed as a result of our “essential” working conditions to this new disease. It is an important lesson-particularly in this moment of time. Feeling like a person who must be isolated from their community is something that each of us has felt in one way or another. Computer screens aren’t a replacement for hugs and handshakes in shul. Living room couches don’t replace the sanctity of sitting in sacred space and beloved sanctuaries. Waking around with masks is already a sign of social disengagement. A quick smile on the street to a stranger is no longer possible. But knowing that it is wiser to remain outside and not go into a home when potentially having been exposed of a flight (small potential and my mask and face shield are pretty good evidence of my precautions) reminds us that for so many having once been placed on the margins was not something that would ever be undone. I will fully re-enter society again in a week or two. Stanley Stein(zl) was never given the chance. Tragically, had he lived in Biblical times, it is quite possible that KOHEN(priest) would have declared him “pure” In due time-a week or two as well. If you ever think that the biblical text is irrelevant to today’s world, just think of their openness to re-integration of the “diseased” and our inability to do so-not simply for those who are diseased- but who face a lifetime of marginalization as a result of skin color, economic status, gender or gender identity. My mask will come off- but our society’s blinders will stay on far too long. Morris (written in 35 minutes since took off from Columbus and sent to you via gogoinflight).

Sent by my iPad

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