

**From:** [David Kraemer](#)  
**To:** [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 8.3.20  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 4, 2020 11:12:13 AM

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Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Morris Allen <[mojo210al@icloud.com](mailto:mojo210al@icloud.com)>  
**Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 8.3.20**  
**Date:** August 3, 2020 at 9:13:23 AM EDT  
**To:** MOJO210AL <[MOJO210AL@aol.com](mailto:MOJO210AL@aol.com)>

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 4 Cars 3 Trucks 2 Dog Walkers 1 Bicyclist 1 Runner 1 Motorcyclist

In preparation for a two-day bike trip Phyllis and I are going to take later this week, we purchased a new piece of bike gear yesterday at REI. Immediately upon coming back home and checking to see just how much I overpaid for the article, as I opened my computer and sure enough the first ad that popped up on Amazon as I went to check was that very item. Mind you, we hadn't looked beforehand for any such item, least of all the exact brand and article itself. (I overpaid, but not by so much and the rebate for being REI members coupled with cost of gas in returning it essentially made it a wash ) I tell you that because as we all know, the virtual algorithms that define our life are truly impressive and bit frightening. Yesterday morning a similar incident occurred that had me thinking about it [this morning](#) on my walk.

Amazon Pictures APP daily highlights pictures it has stored from that date from years gone by and has them pop up when you open the APP up. Yesterday there were pictures going back as far as 2012 but the picture it highlighted from 2013 actually was truly insightful. At least that is what I decided [this morning](#) as I was walking. It was a picture of the restored synagogue in Oswiecim, Poland from August 2, 2013. A group of about 20 of us, many of whom had known each other since were kids but all who had connections with one another from our 20's, took a private group trip to Poland. Organized by our friend Sandy R., it was a week that continues to have profound meaning on many levels—most of which are not important to explain today. That trip did move me to organize a trip for my synagogue a year later, and together, these two visits to Poland are almost always rattling around in my soul. In any event, having arrived in Krakow on the evening August 1, 2013 and staying at the Ester Hotel, we woke up early the following morning for the visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau. After another bus ride through the Polish countryside, we arrived at the small town of Oswiecim where the camps were located nearby. And our first visit of the day was to the old Jewish quarter of the town, and to a restored synagogue. What was once a thriving Jewish community in the town is of course reduced to a relic of its past serving as a museum. But the group being who the group was, also davened(prayed) in that

space and brought the relic to life. Following our davening, we spent an intense day engaged with the violence and hatred of the past, filled with images of despair and loss, death and destruction. I didn't really remember that we had visited Auschwitz-Birkenau on August 2, 2013. It was a visit that was timeless and not bound ever again by a particular date. What I did know, is that our group chose to enter and was able to freely leave—choice and freedom were not variables that those who were exterminated inside those camps ever could imagine.

When I opened my Amazon photo APP yesterday to see the pictures from years gone by, I was stunned that the picture which it chose to highlight from August 2, 2013 was a picture that I had taken of our group engaged in prayer. I mostly took it for the image of Phyllis it presents—her prayerful image inside a shul—something that she felt so powerfully each week in her life—until Corona (temporarily) robbed us of our place. But I took hundreds of pictures that day and this is the one that the APP knew somehow to choose. I quickly sent it to a few our friends who had been on the trip and went on with my day. As the day unfolded, I thought little of that picture. Last night as I slept, that picture reappeared in my mind. In my dream, I only heard all of us repeatedly saying Amen, Amen, Amen. And then I awoke and went on my walk. It was only natural that this would be the focus of my walk. What did the APP know about me that it was trying to have me understand? As I walked [this morning](#), I came to believe there are three answers to that question that leave me a little more comfortable. That APP knows me at least as well as I know myself. First it understood that in the midst of fear and sorrow and hatred and violence, I still live with a sense of hope and faith and devotion to a people, to a cause and to a future. Second, it was right in seeing that I live with a deep sense of responsibility for understanding history and not jettisoning its lessons—even while those lessons have to be understood through the eyes of the moment and not simply for the period in which they occurred. And third, it really got the fact that there are no words for the gratitude I feel in my life for Phyllis, for the deep friendships that sustain us both in our lives, and for the possibility of continuing along this path—God willing—for years to come. It is frightening just how much of who we are is known by the APPS we frequent—but at the end of the day it is reassuring they are only allowing us to see ourselves in their virtual mirror-like presence. Morris

Sent by my iPad