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Subject: FW: One person's daily response to Communal Fear
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
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To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>
Subject: One person's daily response to Communal Fear

DAILY CENSUS: Many raindrops lovely mist

Here is a piece of advice for those of you in coupled relationships. When your partner says it is supposed to rain in the morning, so maybe you should skip the walk and sleep an hour later—simply say yes. If you say no, and the alarm goes off as usual, and its raining you only have two choices. Apologize and admit your error—or go walking.

As I walking, my mind wandered back to a dear friend who has spent the bulk of his career in one Southwestern town and has truly brought the presence of the sacred into the lives of his community. Long ago, when we were in our 30's or early 40's we had a discussion of when we might be ready to die? He told me the following-the day I have a grandchild; my work will be complete. Yesterday, I had occasion to quickly say hello to our grandson. When he saw me over the screen—this nearly 2-year old shouted out, “hi Saba”(grandfather in Hebrew). Your heart does melt. Since I still had work to finish up from the day, I had to leave and said, “bye honey, love you.” He replied, “bye honey, love you”. The age of parroting is a precious age.

I tell you this, not because I am at all ready to die, nor do I imagine my colleague would embrace his thinking of his late 30's as determining the course of his life as we enter our mid-60's. I tell you this because on my walk I realized that the Jewish prayer book in the time of crisis is missing a critically important image for us to embrace this year. Let me explain. One of its great phrases, one that I cherish and say daily, is the following: Praised(blessed) are You, Adonai, Our God and God of Our Ancestors, The God of Avraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of Sarah, the God of Rebecca, the God of Rachel and the God of Leah.” It is a powerful phrase, placing ourselves in a line of tradition and calling not only on our own merit for God's presence, but calling upon the merit of our ancestors to intercede on our behalf. This notion of the merit of our ancestors is a classic one in Jewish tradition. “Not for my merit alone, but for those who came before me show me Your presence”. In a tradition as rich as Jewish tradition is, the history itself of our survival and our continued unending narrative leads beautifully to calling upon our ancestors for their merit and their intercession.

In truth, the enduring success of “Fiddler on the Roof” and its presentation in places where there are no Jews living is an indication of the power of calling upon tradition and one's ancestral heritage in the search for meaning. It is a non-sacral presentation of that prayer. But listening to our grandson,

and living in this moment, I realized this morning on my(damp) walk that our prayer book is missing something powerful. Today I found myself reciting the following: Praised(blessed) are You, Adonai, Our God and God of Our Descendants". And then it struck me. In a moment of global disruption, religious faith that is going to survive is religious faith that is evident in the breach of tradition.

That my friends, is the success of the initial generation of rabbis that found themselves living during disruption. Those ancient rabbis understood that in crafting a Seder ritual, they had the best opportunity to sustain the story of their ancestors. They crafted this Seder less for themselves and more for generations to come. As the embers from the Second Temple still metaphorically burned, the ancient rabbis understood that unless they acted with courage and with chutzpa and with belief that they had the responsibility to do so, the story of our people would have ended then and there. In the midst of disruption, they saw the future and they took the bold act of reframing it through their actions. No more paschal sacrifice for them. Their response was to "make-believe" that in telling this story that this is how their ancestors celebrated Passover. This year, we are living in a much less dramatic moment of disruption—but it is a moment of disruption, nonetheless. There will be no Seders like any others we have been to. There will be no grandparents around our table, no grandchildren to hold on our laps. Rather for almost all of us we will be alone, or in a small family setting. And this year we are therefore most likely going to experience a break with tradition that is palpable. And in that break of tradition, we are can do one of two things. Behave as if nothing is different and tell the same story. Or, like the ancient rabbis, frame an additional narrative that will endure as a result of this change.

For Jews my age and older, most of us have a memory of being at a Seder led by our grandfather—himself an immigrant—reading and chanting from the Haggadah(the text of the Seder) and us little kids bored and not understanding all that was transpiring. We loved asking the 4 Questions, and if we were lucky enough searching for the Afikomen and receiving a pat on our little head for finding it. For most of the Seder—which was theoretically directed towards us—we found ourselves outside its telling. And yet, that memory may indeed be the sweetest memory we hold onto—and which may account for the fact that the Passover Seder is the most "popular" of all Jewish rituals. For many of us, we live for Passover. We look forward to kvetching about Matzah, how our system is not working right, the first taste of the bitter herbs, the sweetness of the charoset. The different pots and pans, the coverings on our shelves—all of that-- for most of us --for a few hours together with friends and family and other loved ones when we will tell stories about Pesachs long ago and far away. Not this year—this is a year we are called upon to tell the story so that the God of our ancestors will be present for the God of descendants. It is not the merit of past lives that we are calling upon this year—it is the shaping of future lives that we are responsible for. So whatever you do at your Seder table, do it with the realization that in the midst of disruption the story you tell will be the enduring one that is recalled. The collective descendants of our people are awaiting your answer. (Alternatively, I should have stayed in bed that extra hour today)

Sent by my iPad