

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: FW: One Person's Daily Response to Communal Fear
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Sent: Monday, April 6, 2020 9:36 AM
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Subject: One Person's Daily Response to Communal Fear

Daily Census: Not applicable as I went a completely different way with no basis for counts

No one will ever look to see if I was mentioned in GQ magazine. I am not known for my sartorial ways nor am I the spendthrift that is also most likely a prerequisite for consideration. I should point out that there are other ways to acquire a shout out in the magazine as was evidenced by mention of my boss recently. Her prescient understanding of the inherent conflicts present between lawmakers and economic self-interests led her to introduce the HUMBLE Act last year. If only it has already become law(<https://www.gq.com/story/coronavirus-senate-profiteers>). But I digress..

After starting this walking habit of mine, I realized that the shoes that I had been using for my daily walks, were not made for walking. Not really wanting to spend money on shoes, I kept making excuses for avoiding a purchase. After not being willing to listen to me anymore about how my back hurt after I was done walking, Phyllis pulled up a website and made me purchase really good walking shoes. The last 4 or 5 days since I have had them, I have come to really appreciate the importance of good shoes. And as I was walking today, I realized that to start this week that for Christians is Holy Week and for Jews leads into the story of our liberation through the celebration of Passover, I needed to share a story and its aftermath.

For many of you reading this, you know the first part of the story. I told it 15 years or so ago in a High Holyday sermon about the unknown lives we touch long after we are gone. My oldest brother was born with club feet. In many of his baby pictures, there is a metal bar across the bottom of his feet connected to baby shoes. As a result, he grew up with two different shoe sizes. What I didn't know was the story of why we always went to one shoe store in Denver to purchase shoes—almost always before Rosh Hashanah or Pesach. I loved that Mr. Reiff's store was next to donut shop. My mother liked it because the proprietor was a true mensch in every way. My mom would bring the four of us into the store and Mr. Reiff would go down the line and measure our feet. And after a visit to the storeroom, Mr. Reiff would emerge with Buster Brown shoes or some other shoe and fit us all. The purchase complete, and the shoes selected, we would leave the store and head over to the donut shop. What I didn't know was why we never purchased shoes anyplace else. Not for many years.

When I was in high school, then already living in Lincoln, I asked my mom why we always went to Mr. Reiff's to buy shoes. She told me this story. "You see, when Mr. Reiff went into his storage

room, he took one shoe for your brother that fit his right foot and another shoe for your brother that fit his left foot—and brought the two shoes out in ONE BOX. He would never embarrass another in public and felt it important to honor the dignity of every person he came across.” I loved that story then and I love that story now. When I told it, I assumed it would be appreciated by those who heard it and would have made my point that our lives impact many others for whom we have no count.

When I told that story, however, I had no idea that sitting in shul that morning was the son of Mr. Reiff, who was then living in Minnesota and was a prominent pediatrician and researcher at the University. He came up to me afterwards and told me this story—one that I have only shared with my family. His mother once told him that his father was a very special man for the way he treated his customers. She told him that there was a family that came in with four children and that his father would quietly in the back room take one shoe from one box and another shoe from yet another box, and bring them out to the young man whose feet were different sizes and ONE PAIR OF SHOES. He never charged them more than for a pair of shoes and took the loss on the odd sized pair that remained. For this man, that story was an enduring memory of his father’s kindness. How odd that on a yontiff morning in Minnesota, I would tell a story about growing up in Denver and another person would hear a story about his own father. I share that story today, not simply because I have come to appreciate shoes that fit and function effectively. No, I tell you that story for two reasons, one both Mr. Reiff’s son and Annie Allen’s son became caring physicians. I don’t know if it was because of the shoe story—but I do know that each carries a piece of that kindness inside of them. But the other reason I tell you that story is because of the week we are in. This will be a Holy week and Pesach like no other in our memories. And remembering the goodness of others in our lives is a beginning to accepting the narratives that our scriptural traditions will share with us this week. And if remembering the goodness of others is a beginning to accepting the narratives that our scriptural traditions will share—then make this week a week of kindness, of hope and of leaving legacies—legacies we might never fully know we left. Morris

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