

From: [David Kraemer](#)
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Subject: FW: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 9.16.20
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 16, 2020 9:15 AM
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WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 5 Cars 2 Trucks 2 Runners 1 Dog Walker 1 Walker 1 ISD#197 School Bus #199

Today most probably is the last musing I will write before the year ends and a New Year begins. Tomorrow, Phyllis and I will leave our house early as we drive to Columbus for yontiff. While I have work to do in the car, several meetings to “attend”, Phyllis will drive, and we will travel east of the garden that we know as Minnesota. It will be a Rosh Hashanah, a New Year, like no other. When I accepted the invitation in February from Agudas Achim in Bexley to serve as their High Holyday rabbi, I had no idea how much work it would be to prepare to serve a congregation whose sanctuary will be mostly empty and whose people will hopefully be tuned in over their computers. When I retired from the pulpit, I really never planned on doing pulpit work again—except to fill in on a shabbat if asked. But after having helped a congregation in Lexington, Kentucky through their year of transition without a full-time rabbi, I decided that the opportunity to pinch-hit was something I could do. In fact, for most of my baseball career, (read little league), I was a great pinch-hitter. Usually called up to bunt and to move a runner into scoring position, I stuck the bat out and was immediately out at first and done for the day. The word on the street about the 12-year old Allen —“good bunt, no field.” I learned, however, two things from that short appearance in the game. Your bench matters, and sometimes it is better to be the sacrifice than it is to be star.

This year, when we (don't) read Torah in shul(AA is sending out the Torah readings in advance so that our davening and learning remains as interactive as possible), we will read on Day 2 of another good kid—who was mostly called into the game as a pinch hitter—to be sacrificed for the good of the team. Isaac receives short shrift inside the Torah, but his role as a transitional generation inside the unfolding narrative of the Jewish people cannot be ignored. It is he who makes the first choice to take on the lessons that his parents had found meaningful and to hold onto what he inherited and who would make it possible for others to follow. Though out at first, he stayed in the game and because he was willing to hold onto his humanity and to embrace the divine gift of choice, he ensured that the unfolding narrative of the Jewish people would still be unfolding today. He was a bench player, but the fact that in his later life he re-dug the wells of his father, indicates that he understood the importance of choosing to use his gifts for good. That, in part, is why I guess I still find myself worrying about yontiff and who will be there and will they watch, are they going to appreciate what I say, years after I had thought my time had come and gone?

There was another reason I wanted to do this pulpit in Bexley. Phyllis and I were blessed with three

kids who were regularly in shul and who grew up in a community with peers, friends and adults who cared for them. In part that was due to Phyllis' passion about her own Jewish life and the fact that she was a regular shul goer gave her kids the modeling they needed to see. My kids grew up knowing me as a dad and as a rabbi. I was both a pretty engaged dad and a pretty engaged rabbi. But grandchildren are another thing altogether. Hugo might never know me in that role. He loves when his savta, mostly, and his Saba read him "bukhs" over facetime, but he will never know a significant part of my life or his Savta's as a truly talented physician. (Except for an occasional question as to whether he has an ear infection). So I decided that this year, I would serve this shul in Bexley, so that at the end of it all Hugo might run up onto the Bimah as we sang Adon Olam. I thought that would implant in his memory a moment of connection to a piece of my life. It won't happen, and indeed other memories of the days will take place. The gathering in the park near his house where one of the Shofar sounders will be on Sunday will actually be even better and more important. For there might not be a better memory for Hugo to embrace, than the presence of all 4 of his grandparents being together as the shofar is sounded. For the four of us, it will be a moment to share in seeing our grandson respond to the call as his parents continue to choose the path of the ancient Isaac. That will be a highlight of this New Year, of this Rosh Hashana. In a year when blessings have been too few and too far between—that moment will be one that I will hold onto for years(God willing). The most important thing I have learned about this year, a year filled with too many deaths, horrible national leadership, racial divides exposed once again, is that being a bit player in a great game is actually a constant. We don't learn that early enough; we keep thinking we are the center of the drama—and indeed it might very well be important for us in the micro levels in which most life is lived. But in truth, a "good bunt, no field" attitude about oneself—knowing that you played your part and you did it well—might just be the most important thing to carry with you into the year unfolding. My only prayer is that we get called upon to pinch hit for many years to come—in health, with mazel, and with joy. Shana Tova. Maybe a piece from Ohio on Friday-it just depends if the manager calls my name. Morris

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