

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: Fwd: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 7.22.20
Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2020 11:10:19 AM

Begin forwarded message:

From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 7.22.20
Date: July 22, 2020 at 9:08:26 AM EDT
To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 7 Cars 3 Trucks 2 Dog Walkers 2 Walkers 1 Runner

[8 AM](#) meeting. Gotta write fast. [This morning](#) there was an early reminder of what late summer mornings bring. That lovely chill in the air that foreshadows the change of seasons. By Shabbat, when Phyllis and I set out for our Shabbat 10K walk, the weather is supposed to be hot and humid. You don't need a weatherman to tell you the summer weather in Minnesota. In any event, as I was walking [this morning](#) with this wondrous and refreshing chill, I found myself thinking a great deal about the start of the new Jewish year that will commence in the latter part of September. It is obviously not unusual for someone who spent every July for most of his adult years convinced that this year he would have nothing to say to those who showed up in shul. But what I was really thinking about is how vastly different the world is this year from last year. On sure, the toxic leadership emanating from 1600 remains the same, but the world in which he spews that toxicity has changed dramatically. And being alert to the signs of that change is truly important to bring into the communities to which we are connected.

As I was walking, I realized that how my people have by and large celebrated the arrival of a New Year will be vastly different this year than last. Sure we will eat our apples and honey to pray for a sweet new year and we will find a body of water to throw bread crumbs imagining our ability to rid the sinful crumbs in our life away, and many of us will still fast for 25 hours on Yom Kippur seeking atonement from both God and humanity. But the formal HIGH HOLYDAY service will be so different. The discussions on clergy sites revolve around how long should a zoom service last, does there need to be a prayer quorum inside the sanctuary, can we sound the shofar, what is mandatory to recite and what about the sermon? [This morning](#) as I was walking, I realized that the differences in my daily routine as a result of Covid-19 and how I start my day indicates that many of those questions are about trying to fit a round peg into a square hole. And suddenly, I found myself listening to a debate between two wonderful older women in my old shul that graced our lives for many years: Sarah Witkin(zl) and Zeld Katz(zl). Sarah is the the reason we have a morning minyan at the congregation.

Having started a daily minyan at the beginning of Operation Desert Storm in 1990 so we could offer a daily prayer for peace, in February 1991 we faced a dilemma. The war ended and what should we do. Sarah spoke up and said—let's just come back tomorrow. And she and her friends that formed the bulk of the required 10 people were able to maintain a daily ritual that got them out of the Cleveland High rise. But one person who rarely came in those days to minyan was Zelda. She walked. In those days, Zelda could be seen walking all through St. Paul. Her daily ritual was not formal prayer, but she literally prayed with her feet. And while in later years, she became a regular at formal morning prayers and a beloved figure at Sabbath services, when she was able to—she chose the outdoors to offer praise for the magnificent world of creation of which she was an inheritor. And suddenly it dawned on me—as I was walking—that I have embraced the ritual practice of Zelda at this moment in time and left behind the prayerful quorum, found on ZOOM. I still pray, but I pray differently now—more in solitude and less in public gatherings-particularly gatherings that force me to sit inside when the weather is a welcoming reminder of God's blessings.

And suddenly I realized that for all the discussions of how to make High Holyday services “work” this year—the answer might indeed be right outside our windows. This is the year to break out of sitting in synagogues for prayer and to embrace a piece of the theology of the days which we are celebrating. “Hayom Harat Ha’Olom—Today the world is pregnant with possibility”. And while we wont actually recite that phrase this year on day 1—because it is also Shabbat and we don't sound the shofar, blah blah, blah etc—the fact remains that for many people that image is a powerful and necessary one in bringing them to community for the New Year. So instead of trying to fit the round services into the square peg of the computer screen, how about the Jewish people this year welcoming the New Year with a democratization of the ritual and a recognition of the blessings that remain ours. Here is what I would suggest we consider. A Rosh Hashana 10K as it were. Imagine if the Jewish community across the Jewish world would become like Zelda this year and pray with our feet. I would imagine that in each community, such a gathering could take place so that there is a route that is taken, and along that route there are places to stop and reflect on pieces of the high holiday liturgy, to hear from folks who are living out the messages of the days themselves, to join in a soft singing of the melodies that are filled with the hope that we will be remembered for life—to stopping at medical facilities to recite the unatane tokef—a prayer that screams out to us “who will live and who will die—who by fire and who by water...” Imagine the scenes around the world as this people which has survived genocidal attempts to destroy us, that has been the canary in the mineshaft of hatred inside this world for centuries, and yet remains a proud and dignified community—were to fill the streets of towns and cities across the country and the world in welcoming a new year—still able to see the blessings that are ours and the work that is still needing to be done. I have more work to do on this idea—but [8 AM](#) is calling and I never miss a meeting in this job! Morris

Sent by my iPad

