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Reflections from Rabbi René – Lessons from these times

The world is going to be different

Forbidden relationships in the Torah are first described in Leviticus 18, and introduced by this verse: “You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. You shall not follow their practices” (Lev. 3: 18).

Israel is in a liminal state, having left Egypt, not yet arrived in the land they are heading to, but they already know that they cannot follow the practices of the past, and they are warned to be creative and to imagine a new world for the future.

Today, in the relative comfort of our homes, we have come to realize that the world is going to be different when we have reached the other side, and we begin to acknowledge that these new shores have to give birth to a new, better world.



We cannot continue with a life style that is based on selfishness, consumption, pursuit of wealth at all cost, and disregard for our place in a larger, holistic universe, where all parts are interconnected. We've given up a sense of common good and embraced a system that created imbalance in human relationships; we've accepted inequality in wealth and education, we've given in to fake news for the sake of peace of mind. We have refused to see the damages caused to the environment – as long as we had access to the newest version of our toys.

Life, community and togetherness

The lessons of the coronavirus crisis are daunting. It is only by accepting a community of fate that we can overcome it, by recognising that sectors of human activities, such as health, are beyond free market. Successful governments in the world are those who are able to overturn the rules of partisan politics and to seek consensus. There is a political lesson – in its noblest sense, the *polis*, the community – to learn from these turbulent times. Despite the sheer number of deaths, we would have faced ten times, twenty times more without a lockdown. We have finally taken stock of what is at heart of our societies: life, community, and togetherness.

Some of our members have already lost loved ones to Covid-19, and I wanted to send them my heartfelt condolences. Their names will be added to those who lost loved ones in previous weeks, and when all this is over, we will come together and mourn our parents, friends, and all those who died in this dreadful time.

Despite our sorrow, KLS has become even stronger. Our council has started to think ahead of the confinement. How can we keep up the good community spirit that has emerged from the worries of the pandemic? How can we improve our connections, the many threads that unite all our members and beyond our community, to include more and more people, and to offer to all a safe haven?

I send you all my love and virtual hugs, and I am looking forward to seeing you soon online,

Rabbi Rene

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