

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: Fwd: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 7.29.20
Date: Wednesday, July 29, 2020 9:40:38 AM

Begin forwarded message:

From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 7.29.20
Date: July 29, 2020 at 9:19:08 AM EDT
To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 4 Cars 2 Trucks 1 Walker 1 Dog Walker

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was an age of wisdom, it was an age of foolishness..." any self-respecting 10th or 11th grader growing up in the 1960's or 70's in Nebraska could identify that opening line from Dicken's [A Tale of Two Cities](#) with little prompting. In fact, that opening line might be one of the best opening lines ever written. Ok, it may not outlast "In the beginning when God began to create..." but in truth the line from Dicken's may be more quoted. I tell you this because opening lines matter and set the stage for the unfolding of a narrative that establishes an enduring presence inside our own souls. Tonight, many in the Jewish orbit will chant from the Biblical book of [Lamentations](#), inaugurating a 25-hour fast day in commemoration of the loss of Jewish sovereignty in 586 BCE and again in 70 CE when the ancient Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed. And in truth, while less known than the opening line quoted above from Genesis, the opening line of [Lamentations](#) is also one for the ages: "**Alas, lonely sits the city...**" That opening line captures the sadness of the day, the loss of presence, and the despair of emptiness. It underscores the reason that the 9th of Av is seen as the saddest day on the yearly Jewish calendar. It is a day when we are to experience the absence of presence—the presence of relationship to a place, to a people, to a Supernatural Being. It is a day to experience the sense of exile—from oneself, from one's purpose, from one's vision. It is a day to capture that sense of loneliness that defines the nature of Jerusalem bereft of her purpose and at a loss for her being. We are to experience the loneliness of exile, the disconnect from the core of our identity.

The book of [Lamentations](#), like the people who see its message as sacred, does not allow the reader to end on such a sad note. In what just might be the most quoted line from the book itself (for it has found its way into the liturgy of our people), the book, when chanted, ends with the following verse: "Turn us to You God and we shall return, renew our days as before". This book, like this people, cannot afford the luxury of feeling alone and at a loss. In the course of five short chapters, taking us lower and lower in describing the despair of destruction—this book and the people who read it

are suddenly left with hope for renewal. There is a path for return and that path is found in seeking the restoration of relationship. This ending verse is intended to work as the defining statement of the purpose of the fast itself. Feeling a loss, suffering grief, finding oneself alone—are all elements we will each experience in life. If these past 5 months have taught us anything—it is that our world feels smaller, our opportunities are less, and loneliness is a terrible predicament. These past 5 months have been an enduring Tisha B'av, where schools have been shuttered, where relationships have been severed, where work has been upended, where communities have become disconnected, where families have suffered and where death has been too evident. These months have seen us endure a type of exile from our usual pursuits, our normal daily life and the joy of a weekly calendar that defines the sacred in the midst of the mundane. Communities have been pulled apart, sacred sites have been lost, and shared purpose has been compromised. But while this covid induced Tisha B'av like feeling has been experienced by us all, I have to imagine that the ending verse of the story will not leave us in that experience.

That “verse” has yet to be written, and I am certainly not going to be the one who writes it, but there will be a storyline and a way that restores our sense of purpose and dedication to the vision of one’s people, one’s country, one’s values. That ending line or lines, will also find their way into the shared “liturgy” or discourse of the people. We have already added a few images of what those healing lines will be—that finally in this country we will work towards serious repair of racial disparities, the human dignity is not dependent on color or class, that science matters, that leadership is not about bullying, that hatred is not a value that we will tolerate in the White House. But like the people who will chant this book tonight, ending lines should not be confused with finality. We read this book every year and remind ourselves what can happen when baseless hatred, when hatred rules over compassion, prevails. Lamentations ends, but the work continues to make its ending become real. That work demands rigorous commitment and it demands constant attention. And once a year it demands experiencing the absence of presence. This year Tisha B'av(9th day of Av) has stretched on way too long—some might say since January 2017(just saying that some might say) —but regardless try to emerge on the 10th with a renewed commitment to restoring who we know we are to be. Morris

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