

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: FW: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 7.10.20
Date: Wednesday, July 15, 2020 9:51:29 AM

From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, July 10, 2020 8:28 AM
To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 7.10.20

A third day with NO WAGON WHEEL CENSUS

On the Jewish calendar, the next three weeks are called the “weeks between the straits”. On the Jewish calendar yesterday was the 17th day of Tammuz. Three weeks later, we will be commemorating the 9th day of Av, a day on which we mourn the loss of both Ancient Temples in Jerusalem as well as several other tragic events associated with the date. The 9th of Av is considered the most tragic day in the Jewish calendar and it is spent in a 24/5 hour fast, the reading of the Book of Lamentations, and a changed pattern in ritual behavior during the actual three services of the day. It is also important to note that immediately upon the end of Tisha B'av (9th of Av), we begin a countdown of 7 weeks leading to the start of a New Year. During this 7-week period, the weeks are accentuated by special additions to the Shabbat service which highlight comfort, hope and reconciliation. The structural founders of this great religion understood the importance of moving from despondency to hope, from destruction to healing.

This year, these next ten weeks provide an opportunity for all of us, Jew and non-Jew, to find that path forward. It is an opportunity to engage in real understanding of the depth of despair that so many in this country are feeling. For many of us, life has been upended since mid-March. We have worked from home while schooling our kids. And they might be the lucky ones. While employment numbers are improving, still 1.3 million people filed a new unemployment claim in this country last week. In my county in which I love, there were over 60,000 unemployment claims filed by people in a three-month period—approximately 1 in 6 workers in the county. And since May 25 when the spotlight has also been focused on the racial divides inside this country, America has added to the many reasons people already felt on edge. It is almost as if these past 4 plus months have been “months between the straits.” We have been collectively experiencing the losses all-around us and they are for this moment in time no less (and maybe just much more) real than the liturgical calendar mourning now being entered by the Jewish people themselves. It is easy to point fingers. The list starts at the very top in this country. The bluster of our President in his attempts to tweet the disease away has led to an unprecedented accomplishment-- making America First in the world in terms of the number of deaths and the length of the disease's fatal presence inside the sweep of this country. In truth, though, he is not alone and those who have enabled his behavior in the last three and a half years are also to blame. And in truth, identifying his fault does not remove our own responsibilities.

It is that last point that makes these three weeks so important to me and to many others. For some Jews, these three weeks are treated like a period of mourning—with the avoidance of joyous encounters—from going to movies and concerts(check that box this year) to not eating meat(I agree not to eat meat this year either) to not attending weddings or getting married(already accomplished on the latter and no one is inviting folks to a wedding on the former). Amazingly, I can check those ritual boxes now and rest assured I have observed these weeks completely—ritually. But for those who know me, you know that ritual behaviors attached to religious life only identify half of the picture as to what it is we are to be doing. The ethical messaging of these three weeks is just as important. WE have to be looking inside of ourselves as to how it is that we have allowed this world to be in this place. And if we can't focus on the world, then focus on our country of residence. And if not our country of residence, then the state in which we live. And if not the state, then our community, and if not the community then in our organizations that we support, and if not in those organizations—then in our families. And if not in our families—then in ourselves. You see, the ancient rabbis suggested that while the enemies of the Jewish people may have destroyed those ancient Temples and eradicated our first and second attempts at nationhood, the fault may have indeed rested with us. They suggested that the cause of this loss was the result of baseless hatred inside the community itself. They made the audacious leap from internal behavior as being the cause of the loss of national pride and sovereignty. That teaching is such an apt one for us today as we all seek physical, spiritual, personal and national healing. And the only way that it can really take place is for it to begin with you and me. We must be willing to call out any behavior which we see that diminishes the dignity of another, be that other a person, a group, an organization, a people or a country. And before we get too high onto our horse in calling out the others who engage in such behavior--we must be willing to look deep inside ourselves to the ways that we knowingly and unknowingly engage in such behavior. It is hard to do so—it is so much easier to look to others and see their faults. But the ancient sages who pointed out that baseless hatred led to their people's downfall understood that looking inside at one's self was a necessary first step to save that which one holds dear. It is just as true today as it was back then. And here is the good news—if we use these next three weeks for serious introspection and reflection as to the baseless hatreds we are living with—we will find the next 7 weeks (or maybe we extend this important period through early November) to be weeks of comfort and consolation bringing hope and reconciliation that we all need. Shabbat Shalom, Morris

Sent by my iPad