

OHR L'NAORRR

Newsletter of the National Association of Retired Reform Rabbis

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Howard Kosovske

The story in TB Menachot 29b about Moses in Akiva's yeshiva does not exactly go the way I learned it in religious school. Here's the real story, brought down from Rav by Rav Yehudah.

Moses ascends on High and finds the Holy One of Blessings sitting and tying crowns onto the letters of the Torah. Ever the questioner, Moses asks the Holy One, "What gives with the additions to the letters?"

God answers. "Several generations from now, a man named Akiva ben Yosef is going to be born, and he's going to derive piles of *halakhot* from every single one of these crowns."

Moses challenges. "Master of the Universe, show me."

God tells Moses to turn around. He does, and now he finds himself sitting in the eighth row of Rabbi Akiva's study hall. He listens to the discussion, but he doesn't understand anything. Moses becomes depressed.

The lecture reaches a difficult point. Akiva's students challenge the master. "Rabbi, where did you get that from?"

Akiva answers, "It's a law going all the way back to Moses at Sinai."

And with that Moses' depression lifts.

There's an important lesson here. Things don't stay the way they were. Nothing in Jewish life is forever. Certain things might be seen as "Moses' law going all the way back to Sinai." But they aren't. In the Menachot story, Moses hasn't yet received the Torah. But what he will receive is, with the passage of time, going to change.

That principle extends now to NAORRR, just as, with this raging Covid-19 pandemic, every arena of Jewish life is confronting the necessity to change. It's not in our sanctuaries where just months ago we gathered to "do Jewish" that the need to innovate is happening. Our lives have moved online where "Zoom" is not just the last word of the old Zionist song about "the pioneer being for the sake of work and work being for the sake of the pioneer. (Zum gali, gali, gali)." Now Zoom is about a computer platform that we use for most every expression of our Judaism.

NAORRR is going to be a part of that. For many, many years, we've been an organization that four days each January brought us together to worship, learn, and experience programs. Most important, we were the arena of *chavruta* where we could be

with people whom we knew really got it. But now, that no longer can be. With the virus, gathering is impossible.

We have therefore changed ourselves. We've re-imagined NAORRR. Instead of meeting in one place, we'll now meet with programs coming from many places. And instead of our being together just four days in one month, we'll now meet and be together and experience expanded programs together across eleven months — online. We'll access everything together while sitting in front of our computer screens.

Since we see a plethora of friends at conventions often going back to our HUC-JIR days, I know that for many of us this scheme is a great disappointment. But I see this as an opportunity. Thanks to our new program committee, we've gotten extremely creative. Even though, now in front of computer screens, we still will be getting together and sharing with one another. And learning with one another. And growing with one another. And we will be doing it throughout the whole year!

My most fervent NAORRR hope is that in January of 2022, we will gather together again in Boca Raton. But even when we do, I also hope that we will never again limit ourselves to being an organization that gathers just four days a year. Even when our in-person conventions begin again, we can continue sharing at least once a month. And through that, we will continue to venture into a whole host of alternative ways to get together.

We, NAORRR, are about to emerge as something very different. But as we do, our original purpose of coming together in the first place will still remain alive and current. Most important, as we go forward, we will be going from today's strength to tomorrow's even greater strength.

And for me that's exciting.

Bididut uv'chevuta rabba,

and with wishes always that you stay safe,

Howard A. Kosovske President, NAORRR



DRISHAT SHALOM from the editor



Phil M. Cohen

There's that old curse, May you live in interesting times. We seem to have fulfilled that curse, plus some. But humans adapt. As odd as it may be to stay at home as much as you can, wear a mask in the presence of others, stand six feet apart, and wash your hands like Mrs. Macbeth, this is our life until better behavior prevails, eliminating the bug, or a vaccine provides immunity. Cause it ain't going away on its own. Meanwhile, if we were a pagan people, we'd be worshipping Zoom. As it is, it's our great servant if not our god.

We bring you the latest *Ohr L'NAORRR*. There's a bit of philosophical reflection, important news from our leadership, and several pieces by colleagues telling of their experiences living in these weird times.

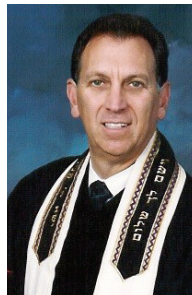
And, oh yes, the details of the revamped NAORRR program, which now extends throughout the year, including a virtual NAORRR convention. We certainly hope that you'll avail yourselves of these many rich offerings.

I wish you safe social distancing and a shanah tova u'm'tukah.

Kol tuv,

Phil M. Cohen, Editor Ohr L'NAORRR

LEMONADE



Sheldon Harr

Out of lemons come lemonade. When one door closes, another opens. Those tritely common expressions are, nonetheless, often true. In any case, the world has provided us, quite uninvited, with lemons and closed doors. Now it is our opportunity to make lemonade as we open more and new doors.

With the cancellation of our traditional January Conference, thanks to COVID-19, we've discovered that with some sweat equity we could offer a relevant, exciting, spiritual, scholarly, interesting year-round programs, while at the same time maintaining as best we could a sense of connectivity with one another.

Online and as interactive as possible, NAORRR will be presenting webinars and workshops every month, uniquely suited for NAORRR members. In January we will be holding an extended conference-like experience. Our scholar-in-residence will be our teacher and friend, Chancellor Emeritus of HUC-JIR, Rabbi David Ellenson Ph.D.. We will also have the opportunity to learn from and dialogue with HUC-JIR president, Dr. Andrew Rehfeld. Even more is in store including workshops by and with our very own members.

NAORRR was forced to re-envision itself. We are in the process of doing so. The lemonade from the lemons and the open doors which once were shut give us opportunities we may not have previously envisioned. But now we are in the process of re-envisioning a new and renewed NAORRR. See our program in this issue

With support and prayers for those who are physically impaired due to this virus, we utter a mishaberach.

May we all be healthy and able to be part of the new NAORRR for years to come.

Sheldon Harr, 1st Vice President

1971 GRADUATION CLASS of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion



June 5, 1971 Ordination - Plum Street Temple

Seated L to R: Rabbis Daniel Mark Sherbok, Stevan Alan Chester, Harold Simon Loss, Terry Ross Bard, Jerold Baker Levy, Mel Hecht, Jeffrey Bennett Lazar, Francis Barr Silberg, Howard Gary Kaplansky

1st Row Standing: Mr. S. L. Kopald, Jr., Rabbis Edward Sheldon Treister, Mayer Isaac Perelmutter, Jey B. Heyman, III, Philip Neil Kranz, Kenneth Harry Kudisch, Roger Curtis Klelin, Arnold Lee Levine, Paul Raymond Feinberg, Roy Stuart Furman, Stephen Jan Einstein, Nicolas Lee Behrmann, Alex Schindler, Dr. Alfred Gottschalk **2nd Row Standing:** Rabbis Jack James Sangerman, Robert Karl Baruch, Bernard Schachtel, Melvin Donald Silverman, Barry Lewis Weinstein, Alvin Marx Sugarman, William Edward Cohen, Barry Sherman Kogan



June 6, 1971 Ordination - New York School

From L to R: Steven H. Pinsky, S.L. Kopold Jr., James B. Rosenberg, David Ruderman, Edward Miskin, Stuart A. Gertman, Richard J. Birholz, Norman J. Cojien



Tuesday, September 8, 2020 @4:00 pm Eastern

Miracles of the Ordinary: A Journey to Everyday Spirituality

A workshop with Michael Zedek

All of us recognize when we experience some exceptional or unusual event. The birth of a child, the loss of a loved one, some remarkable joy or challenge — all of those demand our attention; we cannot but notice, perhaps even embrace. Yet the insight of any serious religious or spiritual journey is not only about the extraordinary moments but also recognizing and elevating the routine and commonplace as spiritual adventures as well. Why does that matter? Should it? How do we become more aware, present to the miracles all around us and in us?

Thursday, October 15, 2020 @ 4:00 pm Eastern

Jewish Values, Social Justice, and the Election

A Webinar with Jonah Pesner and David Saperstein, moderated by Henry Karp.

Our world is in turmoil – the Covid-19 pandemic, racial injustice, civic discontent, political polarization, and a divisive election looming. How are we to navigate these troubled waters? What role does Jewish values play?

Thursday, November 12, 2020 @4:00 pm Eastern

Terrence McNally: The Prolific Playwright

A workshop presented by Diane Steinbrink

Our noted raconteuse will discuss the life and work of one of America's most important playwrights. He was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Tony Award last year, and he died this year at age 80. His work has been honored with Tony Awards and the Drama Critics Circle Award. The program will include

Our wonderful online programs continue through the Fall and into Winter. Dates and times are subject to change, so be sure to watch your email for updates, additions and most importantly – *Zoom links!*

monologues from some of his best-known plays, Master Class, Lips Together Teeth Apart, and his final play, Mothers and Sons. Diane will also share some personal information based on their ongoing friendship over the last few years.

Thursday, December 17, 2020 @ 4:00 pm Eastern

Hanukkah and the Sephardic Tradition

A workshop presented by Rifat Sonsino

Sephardic Jews have their own ways of celebrating Hanukkah. In this seminar, Rifat will discuss some of them, including music, and share some Sephardic sources that attempt to understand the so-called "Hanukkah miracle" from a rational perspective.

Thursday, January 7, 2021 @ 12:00 Noon Eastern

Mini-Convention Part 1

A Shacharit service, with Torah and music, our traditional Azkarah, and the first of two lectures with our scholar, Dr. David Ellenson.

Saturday, January 9, 2021 @ 8:00 pm Eastern

Mini-Convention Part 2

Havdalah service and honoring of our 50th-year Ordination Class

Monday, January 11, 2021 @ 12:00 Noon Eastern

Mini-Convention Part 3

Our annual Plenary session with elections, and the second lecture with our scholar, Dr. David Ellenson.

Watch for more programming, including an interactive session in the Spring with the president of HUC-JIC, Dr. Andrew Rehfeld.

Phil M. Cohen

JOIN NAORRR and Join in the Fun



When I was about to retire seven years ago, a retired colleague told me about an upcoming NAORRR convention and suggested Joyce and I attend. You'll love it, my friend said. I knew about the organization but couldn't imagine spending time in Florida with a bunch of elderly folks who had nothing to say and certainly nothing in common with me. But because my friend and his wife were attending, we figured we would give it a try.

I was pleasantly surprised. I experienced days filled with stories, uplifting worship, scholarly presentations, and workshops taught by colleagues that caused me to think about

many things in new and different ways. Above all, what I found was a camaraderie that made me feel wanted and valued.

Ever since that first convention I have been singing NAORRR's praises because of the opportunities it provides for retired rabbis, spouses, and spouses of deceased colleagues.

There is only one catch. Membership of both rabbi and spouse is required to attend the convention and other NAORRR activities. So don't put it off any longer. Go to www.naorrr.org/join-naorrr/ to become part of this unique community.

Bob Orkand, NAORRR Second Vice-President (Membership)

MY LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC:

Feeding the Birds and my Mind

Jonathan Gerard

This was to be a summer visiting our kids and then helping to chaperone a Duke alumni trip to Kenya followed by a week's cruise amidst the western Galapagos Islands. Alas, all has been postponed.

I live in a co-housing community in Durham NC called Solterra. We share a common house, periodic common meals, common activities such as tubing on nearby rivers, a solstice parade and a July 4th party (with distancing), a community garden, and community chore days followed by a homemade brunch.

“The risks they were taking were heartbreaking to describe.”

This March one member of our community, a pediatric ER physician at UNC Hospital, came to us in a panic. The entire hospital was being flooded with corona virus patients and the doctors and nurses had not nearly enough PPE equipment. The risks they were taking were heartbreaking to describe. Could we help?

Another Solterra member, an engineer, turned his garage into a factory and sent us out to find supplies to make face shields. For the next two weeks we laboriously molded plexiglass, glued foam forehead rests, stretched elastic through hand drilled holes, and set up a production line. I lent my toaster oven to the plastic bending detail and my hands to wherever I was needed along the production line. Soon we found self-adhering foam, larger sheets of plastic to saw and drill, and bolts of elastic—all paid for by a Go-Fund-Me campaign that raised north of \$30,000. By April we were shipping out over 300 face shields a week—to Mass General, MD Anderson, and to whatever hospitals and doctors' groups requested them. Five months later, the work still goes on.

Shared Learning in Chapel Hill offers courses by retired professors and other experts to other curious and searching retirees—from art history, to the study of music, history, literature, archaeology, to current events (“Views on the News”). We have moved to Zoom, a platform that has enabled me to take a course in Documentary Film and another in Social Justice Related TED talks. And I am also preparing two courses that I, myself, will be facilitating in the fall and spring, likely via Zoom.

Thanks to Zoom, I have also been able to continue using my specialization in couples and family counseling—trying to help people in distress. In my own family I put on my story-telling hat and read to my grandson Claudio in Singapore once a week while catching up with his dad—who has taught us both how to make bagels.

Duke Forest is nearby and so my partner and I try to walk 3-5 miles of its trails every day before it gets too hot. I am more of an urban hiker and have discovered that Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill. All have terrific walking tours available online and I do parts of these on Tuesday mornings, while the sun is still low. I now know something of the history and architecture of our “Triangle.” And with my iPhone I have documented the growing plethora of BLM murals that continue to punctuate every urban walk here. I also contribute to my terrific synagogue, Judea Reform, as we continue to make meals for immigrants and shelter them from ICE. Add to that Torah study and my weekly Talmud group, not to mention a pile of novels on my night table and journals on the coffee table and NYT recipes to play with on the kitchen counter, and you see that I am among the very lucky ones. My lettuce is over but the tomatoes and carrots are coming in. And the bird feeders attract continual entertainment.

This Is Our Present; Will It Be Our Future?

Charles S. Levi

Our rabbinic world has changed. I am glad to be retired. Then the call came. My daughter-in-law's one hundred-one-year old grandmother died from Covid19. The family wanted me to officiate in person at her graveside funeral service. Her only son resides in Italy. Some of the grandchildren live in Arizona or in Israel. Others live in Chicago. Of course I would officiate.

I arrived at the ceremony on a rainy Sunday afternoon. I immediately saw the umbrella – it protected the video camera, but not attendees, from the rain. I saw the microphone – it provided input for the Zoom broadcast, not amplification of my voice for the people physically present at the graveside. The nine participants present, including my wife and me and the funeral director, wore masks and gloves. We socially distanced - all the required six feet apart from each other. There was no touching – so there was no k'riah. There was no touching the casket – so there were no pallbearers.

I felt surprised to learn how difficult it was for me to project my voice with a mask on. Delivering the eulogy became especially challenging. I felt even more surprised to learn how impossible it was for me to sing well with a mask on. The entire experience physically and emotionally taxed me. This woman was family. I loved her. But I deeply missed the warmth that her survivors and I could not share in that moment.

Then the service ended. The funeral director distributed sterile dirt packets from Israel to sprinkle on the grave but there was no shoveling of dirt. There was no hugging or visiting at the grave. There would be no shivah. The video kept rolling as the cemetery workers closed the grave. The relatives watching on Zoom from Italy, Israel, Arizona and Chicago said goodbye. We all left.

As I drove away from the cemetery, one question lingered in my mind: This is our Present. Will it also be our Future?

An Introvert's Life

David Klein

For an introvert like me, isolation—with Barbara, my eshet chayil—might even be empowering. I can be happy sitting all day in my home in Carroll Gardens at the computer either working on a project or pursuing the web's engaging distractions. Privileged with health, three kids with their families in Brooklyn, money for living comfortably, a taste for good food, a sense of purpose, what more could an 85 year old demand? To top it off, Talmud Torah k'neged kulam, mitzvah points!

I lead a parashah study group on Shabbat mornings that I started six years ago in a local friendly synagogue, presenting the literary/historical approach that I taught at the University of Louisiana, Monroe. Doing Rashi this year. Big fan of Sefaria and have learned more Talmud in the past few years than I ever did with the Goose (Alexander Guttman) back in the day. Hurray for technology.

Speaking of technology, BibleWorks screens Hebrew, Targum, Septuagint, Vulgate, and virtually all translations in all languages. And every word is linked to lexicons galore. For the past decades I have been in chevruva with a dear friend, Fr Patrick Madden of Shreveport, a master of Greek and Latin, along with Hebrew and Aramaic—especially Peshitta. An hour a week, we have a great time with Tanakh and are up to tenth chapter of Mark. He gives me a lot of help with the Greek and I point out linguistic variations in three Hebrew translations. And we frequently drop in on the Mishnah.

I Skype Yehudah Amichai with a ger. With Ellen Allard, singer and composer, almost completing Chumash in Hebrew after fourteen years. With my daughter, Shira, Siddur, Tanakh, Sefer Aggadah, and whatever she is working on at the moment.

Life is full and very good. And this in the face of disease and deprivation outside. Can a Jew thank God for such blessing?



Joy in a Time of Darkness—March 17, 2020

By Suzanne Eichhorn

My late husband, Jonathan Eichhorn C'62, passed away three years ago after suffering from a degenerative disease for thirteen years. During this time, long-time friends, Judy and Lew Priven, (whom we first met as members of our congregation in Kingston, NY, in the sixties) were also going through similar circumstances. Lew and I supported each another throughout these challenging times — Judy passed away last year — and over time our relationship blossomed. In October 2019, we made plans to be married in Chevy Chase, Maryland on April 19, 2020, at a charming local French restaurant with seventy family and friends joining us.



*Lew Priven and Suzanne Eichhorn,
Susan Liss and Fred Reiner*

In mid-March, when it became apparent that our original wedding plans had to be cancelled and we could not predict when a lockdown might be ordered, we developed Plan B. Late Monday evening, March 16, we decided to get married the next day at my daughter, Deborah's nearby home (we had alerted them to the possibility a few hours earlier!). Fortunately, Lew likes to take care of things well in advance, so we had all we needed — Maryland marriage license, Ketubah, rings, glass, wedding clothes, etc.

When we arrived at their home, and began to walk up the front steps, we were greeted by “MAZEL TOV SUZANNE AND LEW!!” written in chalk on the steps. Rebecca, their eleven-year-old, had written the greeting.

The ceremony was held in Deborah and Steve's backyard, with their two children and Fred Reiner C'73 (officiant) and his wife, Susan Liss, in attendance. The weather was beautiful, and birds were chirping in the background. My grandson, Ari, manned the cell phone so other members of our immediate families could join via FaceTime and share the joy of the lovely ceremony. Steve was the photographer. We are especially grateful that Fred was so flexible with the last-minute plans, and that Susan was one of the witnesses.

After the ceremony, we had dinner at the dining room table, with take-out from a small local Peruvian chicken restaurant and enjoyed a delicious chocolate mousse wedding cake from Whole Foods. A big celebration is being planned for “when things get back to normal”. Someday soon, we hope.

Our wedding was truly a few hours of joy during a very dark time!

MY LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC:

Praying Online
Ralph Kingsley

Back in 2002 I wrote an article for the CCAR Journal entitled “In Search of a Place to Pray,” in which I described my search for a new spiritual home. I mention it because I again find myself looking for a shul. The Covid pandemic has left me without a place to pray. That is, until I discovered Zoom and streaming. Now I can daven all over the country And, in fact I do.

On Friday night, I have worshiped at Central Synagogue in NYC where I can find a mainline Reform service, or at the Free Synagogue, which has a great Kabbalat Shabbat and a powerful preacher in Ami Hirsch. I have even rediscovered a revised UPB at Temple Emanuel, today far removed in style and appearance from the Temple Emanuel of yore. Or, I can attend my own Temple Sinai in North Miami Beach, where rabbi and cantor hold forth in an empty sanctuary in which I once presided.

Saturday morning gives me more online choices, among them my two neighborhood Conservative congregations, or the same options as above, if I am in the mood for Reform. I needn't venture away from NYC where the choices among traditional services are many, but, by far, the most outstanding is Park Avenue Synagogue, which has an outstanding hazan (Azi Schwartz) and one of the truly great preachers of our time in the person of Elliot Cosgrove. The service is amazingly liberal and,

with or without b'nai mitzvah, runs like clockwork from 9:45 to 12. A wonderfully satisfying Shabbat experience.

But you know what? With it all I miss being able to go to a real, as opposed to a virtual service. I miss being part of a flesh and blood minyan, touching the Torah as it passes by, and standing around schmoozing when the service is over. I miss hearing other voices joined in prayer with mine and the feeling of being part of a living, breathing community. I understand what is meant by ruach in a new way and I miss it. I even miss putting on a real shirt instead of a polo to make the day more special. Zoom's a great substitute and I suppose one should feel indebted to the wonders of modern technology for making it possible. But it isn't like being in a real synagogue.

“I understand what is meant by ruach in a new way and I miss it.”

I'm wondering how the High Holidays will all play out. It's a time to be with my people, but I fear they will be scattered hither and yon with only a computer screen to connect me to them. It's a lousy way to experience my waning years.

Report on

THE WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS ELECTION



The World Zionist Congress is the legislative body of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), which serves as the Parliament of the Jewish People, and designates representatives to The Jewish Agency for Israel, The Jewish National Fund, and other affiliates. The Congress meets every five years in Jerusalem,

and it is the only body in which all of World Jewry is represented democratically. These decisions influence hundreds of millions of dollars in funding and paid portfolios.

Representation at the Congress by U.S. delegates is determined by an election. Due to the efforts of the leadership of our movement and grassroots volunteers, ARZA was able to garner 31,500 votes, an increase of nearly 50% from the 2015 election. This means that Reform/Progressive Jews from around the world will be in the position to lead a powerful progressive block, working on behalf of pluralism, equality, and freedom in Israel.

The seven-week US election for the World Zionist Congress garnered over 120,000 votes, more than double the turnout of the last election in 2015 and the highest number of votes since

the election began for the entire American Jewish community thirty years ago. A total of fifteen slates, comprised of nearly 1,800 candidates, were vying for 152 American seats for the Congress during the election organized and facilitated in the US by the American Zionist Movement (AZM). After the votes are certified the number of delegates per slate will be apportioned using a complicated formula. Due to the Covid pandemic, the Congress will not be a live gathering, but the results of the election will still influence major decisions concerning funding and staffing of national bodies in Israel.

It should be noted that though the ARZA slate had the highest number of votes in the U.S. WZC election, it did not receive a majority of votes. A large number of new organizations, primarily Orthodox, participated. They had one goal—namely, to defeat the Reform slate. Still, our success allows the world-wide Reform movement to form a coalition with like-minded groups and Israeli parties that will help advance a progressive agenda in the Jewish state.

Bob Orkand, ARZA past-chair

PRAYING FOR AN END TO CORONAVIRUS:

Is anybody listening?

Over the years, petitionary prayer has played a major role in the religious life of our people. Our traditional ancestors composed prayers that reflected their beliefs about God. One such belief affirmed that God is a just, supernatural deity who demands justice from humankind and hears our prayers and responds to them.

Many of us would challenge that description of God's involvement in our lives. Our experience confirms that no amount of prayer for those who are seriously ill brings about a cure of their condition. When the Coronavirus hit us globally, our prayer to end that pandemic brought no respite. We also don't see natural law suspended as a result of people praying. We know that hurricanes and tornadoes do not discriminate between those who pray for them to end it and those who offer no prayer at all.

When we, as rabbis, hear that an elderly person in our congregation is in the hospital on a ventilator having contracted pneumonia, we have their name called out as part of the misheberach, in effect asking God to intervene and grant that person refuah shlyamah, complete healing.

Yet, if we believe that God has the power to cure the illness, then God had the power to prevent it in the first place, unless God did not want to intervene.

And if God does not have the power to prevent or cure an illness — what is the point of praying for intervention? We must conclude that, either God wants to intervene but is unable to (because God doesn't have the power) or God is able to intervene (God has the power) but God prefers not to. This philosophical reasoning articulated both by David Hume and Epicurus, is a reflection of this honest approach.

If we take this seriously it would mean that all the prayers of petition and all the prayers that express our gratitude to God for God's active participation in our lives, and that all the prayers that

referred to God as “God of compassion and mercy”— all these prayers in our siddur and mahzor would have to be reviewed.

The Reform movement's official siddur, Mishkan Tefilah, reflects some changes from the traditional siddur by providing alternative poetic readings that are quite humanistic. The main thrust in the siddur, however, has been to preserve the prayers that address a personal God. Instead of reading and chanting prayers that address our current concepts of God, we continue to address the God of our ancestors.

There is a place for prayer in our life, but not in the form of petitioning God for intervention. The following prayer written by Rabbi Jack Riemer is an example of one that offers self empowerment, comfort and optimism to the suffering human spirit, without seeking Divine intercession. I would recommend a prayer like this, which is inspiring and rational.

We Cannot Merely Pray to You

*We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
to end war;
For we know that you have made the
world in such a way
that we must find our own path to peace
within ourselves and with our neighbor.*

*We cannot merely pray to You O God,
to end starvation;
for You have already given us the
resources
with which to feed the entire world,
if we would only use them wisely.*

*We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
to root out prejudice;
for you have already given us eyes
with which to see the good in all,
if we would only use them rightly.*

*We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
to end despair;
for you have already given us the power
to clear away slums and to give hope,*

if we would only use our power justly.

*We cannot merely pray to You O God,
to end disease;
for you have already given us great
minds
with which to search out cures and
healings,
if we would only use them constructively.*

*Therefore we pray to You instead, O God,
for strength, determination, and
willpower,
to do instead of just to pray,
to become instead of merely to wish.*

*For your sake and for ours, speedily and
soon,
that our land may be safe, and that our
lives may be blessed.*

I would amend the line in the next to the last paragraph “Therefore we pray to You instead O God, for strength, determination and willpower” to read

*“Therefore we look inward, instead, O God,
for strength determination and willpower.”*

This prayer, with my small emendation, expresses how God has already intervened in our lives and therefore the responsibility for change lies with us.

Our prayer for the end of the coronavirus is for the fulfillment of our hopes and wishes that our wisdom and experience will lead us, soon, to find the cures and healings necessary to conquer this devastating plague.

Sim Prystowsky

YES, BLACK LIVES DO MATTER



Julian Cook

I grew up in a very progressive environment. My grandfather owned an iron foundry in partnership with a Black man. While very philanthropic within the Jewish community, my grandfather also helped build his partner's Black church, and he was an active member of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. I worked one summer in that foundry, alongside many Black men.

My father was a dentist with an office downtown and at least half of his patients were black. So I was taught, not only by word but by deed, to treat all people with respect. Everyone deserves dignity and equality. We thought of ourselves as being color-blind.

As a young child, I also got a glimpse of anti-Semitism. My parents used to take me on summer vacation to a resort area where one posh resort was well-known to not admit Jews. My parents explained the sign that said something like "Dogs, Negroes and Jews not allowed." It left an indelible impression on me: we minorities were all in the same boat.

I came of age in the turbulent 1960's and witnessed the race riots brought into our home by TV and learned not every city was like my city. The news of the deaths of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner in 1964 in Mississippi was shocking to my family. I remember how upset my parents and grandparents were about that horrifying event. We all agonized with their bereaved parents. We followed closely the marches and sit-ins, and the speeches of Dr. King and others, and we applauded President Kennedy for his response to the racism raging across the South.

I learned, many years later, that I had benefitted from White

Privilege, and that didn't sit well with me. Why should I, by virtue of the color of my skin, be treated differently than a Black person? I didn't ask for privilege. Nor did I feel particularly white. (By the way, why don't forms that ask your ethnicity or race ever have a space for "Jewish?")

We are witnessing today a movement perhaps even more powerful than the race riots and protests of the 1960's that brought about landmark Civil Rights legislation. Black Americans are being killed in shocking clashes with police, Black Americans are being devalued and discriminated against, and White Supremacists are unleashing unchecked vitriol as I've never heard before in my lifetime. And yet, many white people and, yes, some Jews among them, disparage the Black Lives Matter movement! How utterly shortsighted their critique. Jews and Blacks have so much in common in our histories; we both know what it's like to be persecuted just for being who we are. (Yes, I am aware there is some problematic language about Israel coming from Black Live Matter, but we need to focus on the generic sense that Black lives matter and understand the pent-up frustration of that community that has made little progress since those heady days of the 60's.)

As I sat down to write this, I learned of the death of Congressman John Lewis, one of the iconic champions of civil rights, a man whom I respected greatly. This country has lost another powerful voice for justice, not just for Black Americans, but for all Americans.

In short, I do believe Black lives matter; they matter as much as any life. This country has about a 400- year history of subjugation of Black people (ironically, about the same period of time as we Jews were supposedly slaves in Egypt) and it's about time we resolve this injustice.

Julian Cook



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