

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: Fwd: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 9.25.20
Date: Friday, September 25, 2020 10:43:48 AM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Date: September 25, 2020 at 9:13:57 AM EDT
To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 9.25.20

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 6 Cars 5 Trucks 1 Bicyclist 1 Person Fishing 1 Runner 1 Walker

The 10 Tens of Repentance—beginning with Rosh Hashana(Jewish New Year) and ending with Yom Kippur(Day of Atonement) are to be days of serious introspection and seeking to mend that which is broken in one's life and relationships. Every email, every news story, every interaction is heightened as a result. BTW, who knew that Minnesota fixed its election laws as a result of Sen. Wellstone's(zl) tragic death days before his 2002 election with a rule that is worse than the symptom. But I digress....

Yesterday, I received a link to an amazing piece of journalism undertaken by Juliet Eilperin and her team at the Washington Post. The link: Here is the English version: https://wapo.st/32YL2Cj_fwapo.st Here is the Spanish: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/es/coronavirus-genetica-brote-iowa/>. (It might be behind a paywall) It describes the continued abuse of immigrant labor at a Kosher meat packing plant in Postville, Iowa and the exposure they suffered to Covid as a result. It is both an enlightening piece of journalism and a reminder of one of the great disappointments of my own life. I spent some 7 years working hard to get an ethical seal of approval onto kosher food -ensuring the consumer that not only did the food meet the ritual standards of our tradition—but met its ethical standards as well. I did this work while also working full-time as a pulpit rabbi and while the pulpit flourished during these years—getting a product to market needed a skilled businessperson and not simply a couple of dedicated rabbis—like Michael Siegel and myself. We had a great team of supporters and allies—but we ultimately failed. While the standards are still there— now owned BY SAAS(SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACCREDITATION SERVICES) as a result of us not being able to provide them with the final funds agreed to, the truth of the matter is that neither the food industry nor the Kashrut mafia wanted us around. While I accept the failure as

primarily mine, there are many others whose inability to provide critical support contributed to our failure. My national rabbinic organization—prior to its current restructuring—was unable to fully embrace the task or see the possibility of placing the Conservative Rabbinate into the American marketplace in a profoundly significant manner. This article reminded me that our failure was not just a failure for us—it failed some of the most vulnerable people now living in America—some of whom are producing the food we are commanded to eat.

That email to me preceded two others that arrived almost simultaneously. One from a distinguished colleague on the east coast that began with the following sentence —“Like many of you, I worked with a professional production company in producing our High Holiday services...” I was not among the many that he included. My services at Agudas Achim in Bexley, Ohio were seemingly primitive in production—but, oddly enough, apparently successful in presentation by the numbers and the comments. The other email detailed a project that has great intentions but, to me anyway, reeks of tone-deafness and lack of thought. It detailed a project that a trans-denominational group of Jews is undertaking called #HESHBONHESHVAN. It is a project seeking congregational support to provide for their clergy an extra week off following the Jewish holidays of Tishri. This Jewish month is intense—and as I wrote on the first day of the month preceding it—a time of serious hard work undertaken by every Jewish clergy—rabbi and cantor. We work hard to make Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and Sukkot work and be meaningful for our congregants. Many congregants probably don’t know what we do the rest of the year—the joke is that we won’t see them again until the following Rosh Hashana. (It was not true in my former congregation nor in many others around the community or this country).

I get that this year has been just as intense. Even with my High Holiday Congregation in Ohio, I gave them all I could since May when they realized that this year the High Holidays were going to be quite different. For those who see this title as a calling and not as a job, it is simply what a rabbi does. Touching the souls of another person is not something most people have an opportunity to do—clergy have that opportunity in each and every encounter. I still treasure it—even if I only dabble in the call every now and then. So it struck me as odd that on the day when my greatest failure in my professional life was again highlighted by reading of the migrant work force in Postville, Iowa again being exploited, that two emails back to back came across my desk. One highlighting the privilege that so many Rabbis live with and have access to funds to enable them to professionally produce their services and the other encouraging congregations to give their clergy an extra week off after the holidays this year and not add programming responsibilities to their lives. For those clergy lucky enough to get #HESHBONHESHVAN, I hope they think of the kosher food plant workers and their exploited work schedule while relaxing.

For me, I cherish the work ethic my parents gave me. My dad(zl) always said, “be grateful someone is willing to pay you to do a job. So do it well.” In my case, the crazy fix to Minnesota election law just means that [February 9th](#) becomes the new [November](#)

[3rd](#). Push forward and keep working for common good and most of all—we should all be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life for a good and healthy and meaningful—and productive—New Year. Morris (Back on Tuesday of next week)

Sent by my iPad