

**From:** [David Kraemer](#)  
**To:** [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 8.10.20  
**Date:** Monday, August 10, 2020 9:29:31 AM

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Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Morris Allen <[mojo210al@icloud.com](mailto:mojo210al@icloud.com)>  
**Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 8.10.20**  
**Date:** August 10, 2020 at 9:12:54 AM EDT  
**To:** MOJO210AL <[MOJO210AL@aol.com](mailto:MOJO210AL@aol.com)>

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There are certain delights that are precious. Most often these are the delights that occur when you have little control over them appearing. One such delight for me is falling asleep to the gentle rainfall on my roof, as I close my eyes to the darkness already surrounding me. That was not the experience of last night. Rather, in the middle of the night, with thunder and lightning and hail falling, most of my neighborhood—but certainly Phyllis and I—were awakened to the harshness of the sounds and the frightening nature of the flashing lights. I immediately thought of the words for rain near the end of the Torah reading this past Shabbat, yoreh and malkosh. While often referred to as early and late rains, they are often also thought of as gentle and harsh. And it was in that context that I awoke last night to the harshness of the natural world and its ability to push away the gentleness of the falling rain that I adore as I fall asleep.

[This morning](#), in thinking about not only how tired I am since I really didn't sleep, but also about the metaphor of the rain itself, I realized that the world we are living in right now is filled with the malkosh—the harshness of the rainfall and not the yoreh—the gentle, soothing, comforting life-sustaining drops that sometimes fall just as you are dozing off from a full day. Indeed, the world all around us is enveloped in a type of “Malkoshness” of a heaviness and of a frightening nature. In mourning the loss of John Lewis(zl), I think we were also mourning a response to bigotry and hatred that seemed somewhat out of touch in today's political climate. The non-violent and gentle touch of person like John Lewis, who in seeking to build alliances seems quaint compared to the voices of so many of his successors still fighting for the cause. And maybe there is a need every now and then for a certain type of Malkoshness to define the rain that falls. And yet, I am not convinced that it is a sustainable model and the disruption it creates in its path may be just more damaging, in the short term, than the good it brings. I do know that my approach to life has always been about relationship building and finding consensus and that it invariably involved compromises that the purist part of me always rejected. And yet, in retrospect, that pattern worked well for me for most of my

life—whether it was in my school days or even now in my later stages of my professional life. I grew up at a time when the voices of change understood that it would only occur by finding a means to bring along those who were initially convinced that change was necessary.

As most of you know, I didn't apply initially to the Jewish Theological Seminary, the then only training ground for Conservative (not a political term in this context) rabbis. As it did not yet then ordain women, I followed the approach of Mary Gendler(zl) who suggested that men not partake in minyanim or organizations where women did not have full access. After my interview at HUC, the Reform Rabbinical school, I realized that I was caught between a rock and a hard place. I chose the hard place after a year's reflection and went to JTS and engaged in a change process that ultimately led me to be asked to work both during (assistant Director) and after my ordination as the Director of Recruitment in order to be the one to seek the first full classes of women to attend JTS. It was an example of how the yorehness, the gentleness, of work allowed the image, the culture, and the wisdom of the Conservative rabbinate to change for the better. I would imagine that style and that approach and that messaging inside my former shul was also a reason it was able to emerge as a voice for religious hope and commitment, here and indeed throughout the country. I continue to seek out friends and allies who find this approach to be the one that enables us to actually change a culture. I don't believe that the harshness of absolutism, that is filled with the lightning and thunder and rage will ultimately ever prevail. Change and growth is more likely to occur as a result of the gentle rains that fall and not the harshness of the hail that leaves damage in its wake. That is not to say that the absolutism of the hail and lightning doesn't have a place in the cycle of nature itself. It is to suggest that those storms do not sustain themselves and their episodic appearances are reminders of the real benefits we gain from a rainy but peaceful day. Too many politicians and too many individuals —on all sides of the political spectrum—have decided that Malkoshness is an answer that the moment demands. Not me, I guess at some point I take issue with Dylan Thomas and exactly 54 and ½ years from today, I think I'll be ready to go gently into that good night. Morris

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