

**From:** [David Kraemer](#)  
**To:** [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 7.27.20  
**Date:** Monday, July 27, 2020 9:47:01 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 7.27.20  
**Date:** July 27, 2020 at 9:16:52 AM EDT  
**To:** "[mojo210al@gmail.com](mailto:mojo210al@gmail.com)" <[mojo210al@gmail.com](mailto:mojo210al@gmail.com)>

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 7.27.20 5 Trucks 3 Cars 2 Walkers 2 Runners 1  
Dog Walker 1 Bicyclist

Before there were elevator speeches and 30-second sound-bytes and on-messaging answers, there was the Pasuk (or Verse) method. People identified their favorite and most significant Biblical verse that summarized their belief system. For two ancient sages, their debate about which verse summarized the meaning of their religious quest has remained unresolved (thank God) for thousands of years. Two early sages are quoted as holding onto two different verses that address the underlying tension in every religion—but certainly evident in Judaism between its particularistic and universalistic messages. For Akiva, he chose “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). His debating partner Ben Azzai chose “these are the generations of Adam” (Genesis 5:1). The words of Akiva come to suggest that there can be no love of the other, until you are able to love yourself. For Ben Azzai—he saw the beauty of humanity as all coming from the same source and seemingly early on understood that race was simply a social construct. In the space between these two positions on what verse constituted the essence of Judaism, a people has flourished for thousands of years highlighting a message of hope and opportunity for the world.

Tomorrow will mark 77 years since FDR was told in the Oval office with graphic detail what was happening to the Jewish people in Europe. Jan Karski, a man still in his 20's but who was a witness to the atrocities in Poland specifically but knowledgeable about Europe in general, came to the White House to share the truth. July 28, 1943, FDR knew from first-hand reports how the mass destruction of the European Jewish community was unfolding. Mind you, this was simply months after the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto took place after a month-long resistance battle undertaken by the remnants of the Ghetto itself. FDR appeared unmoved by the report that Karski provided. Indeed, as I learned more about him some 7 years ago on my first trip to Poland, FDR appeared more interested in the welfare of the horse and animal population in Poland than he did with the life of the Jewish people being marked for destruction. Sadly, FDR was not alone in his inability to accept the truth that Karski

delivered. No less than the Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, who also was a prominent Jewish leader in the country, was said to have found the reports unbelievable. When pressed later as to whether he thought Karski was lying, he replied in excellent legal maneuvering that when he said he found his words unbelievable, he didn't mean that they were untrue—just “hard to believe,” leaving an ambiguity in the air between suggesting that they were “just so painful” or they were simply unbelievable. Regardless, his report was correct and from 1943 until the end of the war in 1945, Jewish lives were lost because the first hand report of Karski was not taken in and plans were not remade to fighting the war to end the mass destruction of the European Jewish community. In fact, while Karski had actually been asked to share with the President that the Allies needed to fight the war to end this mass destruction as a primary aim of their alliance, he later reported that he felt that such a message would most certainly fall on deaf ears inside the White House. This life-long Catholic, who later went on to a distinguished academic career in an American University, came bearing the news that the destruction of the Jewish people was a systematic and planned program fully unfolding in death camps situated throughout the European continent under the control of the Nazi regime.

So why did I write about this today? Well, ever since I learned about Karski's mission and saw the monument dedicated to his life in Warsaw 7 years ago, I have always thought of this man's mission during this time of year. On the Hebrew Calendar, it fell within the three-week period leading to the saddest day in the Jewish calendar Tisha B'Av (which this year is [Wednesday night](#)/Thursday). This 25-hour fast day, marks the lowest moment in a three-week descent that I previously wrote about and which reminds us all of how we lost our initial runs at sovereignty with the destruction of both the 1<sup>st</sup> Temple (586 BCE) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> (70 CE). Over the nearly 2000 years since that second destruction, other tragic events that occurred around these dates have been added to the fast itself. What is instructive, is that at the same time, 2 sages emerged with two different takes on the world in which they were living. The Universalistic sage—Ben Azzai—saw the commonality of all humanity as the important message to teach. The Particularistic sage, Akiva, saw the importance of needing to love one's self before being able to love the world. Today, that debate continues inside the narrow and larger worlds in which I live. For me, the alliances I cherish and the work that I do is because I know who I am at my core. Here is the test to take to determine which team has your number. This past weekend in Marshall, MN, two people at a Wal-Mart store wore face coverings with a swastika on it. When one saw that symbol, did they see a universalistic symbol of hatred directed against any and all minorities, or did they see a particularistic symbol that targets the Jewish people like no other modern symbol of hatred? Love your neighbor as yourself—these are the generations of Adam—taken together a great vision for a people. Either one alone—leaves us left out. Morris

Sent by my iPad

