

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: Fwd: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 12.4.20
Date: Friday, December 4, 2020 9:38:40 AM

Begin forwarded message:

From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 12.4.20
Date: December 4, 2020 at 8:49:14 AM EST
To: mojo210al@gmail.com

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 7 Cars 3 Trucks 2 Walkers 2(two) ISD#197 School Busses #'s
199(eastbound) 145 (westbound) 1 Dog Walker

Two news stories—one earlier this week and one [this morning](#) filled my mind while walking today. In addition, I have a meeting [at 8AM](#) so I will not be able to fully develop what I believe the implications are of these two distinct-yet interconnected stories. Earlier this week, I was somewhat surprised to see that the flagship synagogue of Queens, New York—the Forest Hills Jewish Center had been placed on the market for a small fortune--\$50 million. In the last 90 years, this synagogue has been served by two excellent and insightful leaders—Rabbis Ben-Zion Bokser(zl) and my friend Rabbi Gerry Skolnik. It is not that the congregation is necessarily closing-if fact a perusal of their website demonstrates that it remains a vibrant and vital congregational community. But the facility no longer matches the reality of their needs and I would imagine that they are trying to take advantage of a good real estate market and to redefine their space needs in light of both changing demographics and post covid-19 realities that will impact how every congregation will function.

The other news story was [this morning](#). HBOmax and Warner Bros. agreed to a deal where every first run movie released by Warner Bros. in 2021 will be released the same day on HBOmax. It doesn't take a sociologist to see that the movie industry and the role it played in American life has been dramatically impacted by Covid-19. Changes already were taking place and movie theatres were responding in kind—selling alcoholic beverages, installing different types of seating arrangements, delivering food to your seat during the screening of the films—to name just a few. But in truth, increasingly people wanted instant connection and were willing to pay for the opportunity to see a movie a little after its release at home and at their own leisure. Covid-19 just sped up what inevitably was going to happen.

Changes are coming and were already coming-to both religious institutional life and to the cultural landmarks of American life. I still remember Cinerama theatres in

Denver and getting dressed up to see “the Unsinkable Molly Brown” in the “round”. Those days are long gone and changes in how people can access first run movies are as different today as they were in 1985 as opposed to 1963. But Covid-19 has clearly impacted the rapidity of change and for people who believe that either religious life or movie going is suddenly going to resume as it was BCE(before covid era) need to be disabused of that thinking now that we are living in the Covid Era itself-(CE). What worked programmatically in the BCE will not work in the CE. An example. This week, a friend of mine told me that he had written his own congregational rabbi about something they had written and sent out to their congregation. My friend has yet to hear back from “his” rabbi. On the other hand, my same friend told me in the same conversation that he had zoomed into a shul for Shabbat services in a place not in his own community and wrote the rabbi a note the following day about their sermon. He had asked the rabbi a somewhat penetrating question. Within 3 hours—he received a response from a rabbi for who he paid no dues and lived hundreds of miles away. This “other” rabbi understood that in the CE, congregational boundaries are much more fluid, rapid response matters and a “congregant” might be living in Yahoopitstville and far away from where your “physical” facility might be located. Look, movies aren’t going away, and they will still be made. The Oscars will still be given out. But how we see them and the opportunities for their role as a social outing might be undergoing a severe challenge even as I write. People will continue to seek out religious communities and religious leaders that are willing to engage in ways that aren’t defined by constructs of membership as understood in the BCE days. If I were Elizabeth Warren, I would suggest three areas in my plan of thinking that need to be addressed by any religious community moving forward. But I won’t release my plan just yet. In the meantime—I will have to decide what movies to screen this weekend after shabbat—it might be a good [Saturday night](#) for “White Christmas” as I await first run movies releases on the same day in 2021. Shabbat Shalom, have a great weekend, and see you on Monday. (And btw, if synagogues are for sale at \$50 million—what do you imagine they could get for the movie theatre in your community?) Morris

Sent by my iPad