

## Connecting While Disconnected

It has been quite extraordinary. Members connecting face-to-face in greater numbers and more regularly than usual. From Florida to Mexico to North Hero to Richmond, so many who are not able to come to our synagogue at this time and even in “normal” times for minyan or Shabbat or holiday events are coming together on Zoom. I have gotten to know some of you better than ever before, chatting and sharing in our weekday noon open Zoom conversations. And we have shared Shabbat, Pesach seder and Yom Hashoah memorial in new and engaging ways in our newly virtual world.

I know it's hard; it's surreal and weird and disorienting -- unlike any other experience in our lives. In our first Shabbat service “at home” I spoke about my memories of being in a northern New Jersey community on 9/11, losing a neighbor, knowing people who lost family and friends in the World Trade Center, and living through the fear that the next attack might hit us, even while processing our deep sadness and grief. All the fear, grief and uncertainty changed us.

Today, while feeling the impact of fear, grief and uncertainty once again, we are dealing with a different kind of threat. This is more pervasive and impactful in so many ways. And we can't hug each other for comfort and support.

But we can grab hold of our fears, finding mutual support, spiritual nourishment, caring, and creative coping. We are enjoying the new possibilities that technology offers. Breakout rooms on Zoom. Movie clips and small group discussion on Yom Hashoah. Reimagined traditional Shabbat and holiday services with other innovations. Zoom meet-ups to share caring and support.

We Jews are a resilient people. As long as we keep reminding ourselves how well our people have coped in the past as we faced even worse threats, we can learn from the lessons of our great teachers of the past. They show us how we will come through this even stronger, having learned lessons, built new possibilities and restored hope. Faith and hope can overcome loneliness and fear.

This is not to minimize the challenge of this time. Many people are out of work and economically stressed. We pray that the government and community assistance will help everyone to get through this until restrictions ease. We pray that the time of unemployment be as short as possible, and everyone's jobs and businesses fully restored.

May we remain safe and healthy. Many of you have told me about your newfound family and old-friend connections. This is a time to reimagine and renew our priorities; thankfully we have the technology to connect in so many ways. Our world will be rebuilt from love.

During our stay at home, let's enjoy music, laughter, great books, and film. Let's enjoy fresh air in the emerging springtime warmth. The sound of the birds is a call to gratitude for creation. We will get through this together. As Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav said, “The essential thing is not be afraid.” We will hold each other virtually, and emerge stronger and wiser. And Gd willing, in good health.

I look forward to seeing you soon.  
Stay safe and be well,  
With love,  
*Rabbi Amy*