



THE BLOGS

Jerry Klinger

Coronavirus, Institutions and the Individual



Boynton Beach sunrise - photo by Jerry Klinger

Despite the warning of death hanging in the air, shelter in place, lock the doors, wash your hands every second of every day by the God's of Science, I ventured out. I wanted to know if the sun rose again in the East or, as Bernie Sanders told us, tens of millions of us will be dead shortly.

The sun rose, beautifully, with life, even if I was not sick, and could not wash my hands at the beach for 20 seconds with hot sudsy water. The day began. I retreated to the safety of my home again, secure we had plenty of food, water and toilet paper for at least two weeks. The internet still worked, the cable was not out, my cell phone still connected.

Institution after institution has shut down. Every religious institution, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and others, canceled millennia of traditions and rules fearing the Coronavirus. Group worship was canceled. All us individual souls are forced to be alone with ourselves and with God. It may have come about in our own best interest.

All of a sudden, I realized I did need faith institutions to communicate, commiserate, to supplicate, to find my link to God in this frightening time of need. God was always there and will always be there. We are temporary.

The modern world has been turning from God for a long time. We found a new God, not based, we are told, in superstition, ignorance, and Black Magic. The Gods of Science will be our salvation. The Gods of Science will provide all the answers, certainly over time.

From deep within the cocoon of my shelter in place home, the Gods of Science had failed us. They failed us badly, the entrepreneurs of modern medicine and media, terrified us with imminent worldwide calamity. Bar the Door, wash your hands, was their medieval medicinal advice. The media continues to terrify us all with their ignorance and 24/7 hyperbole. To warn, to advise is one thing. To frighten has other considerations, even political.

Bottom line, they don't know. Statistics are not clear. What seems to be clear is that the Coronavirus almost totally spares anyone under 50 and the vast majority of those over 50. The exception is for those who are already on night's doorstep with pre-existing conditions. In Boynton Beach, God's waiting room, that is the most frightening thing of all. We are there, over 50 with pre-conditions or thinking we have yet undiagnosed pre-conditions.

At home, we are told to pray, to reach within us to find the link to the Eternal but without the solace of the institution. Catholics have Mass for Shut-Ins. Jews...nothing except ourselves. We are terrified to go out into Minyans because who knows how far the Virus has spread. So, we find we don't use, and increasingly, we don't need the synagogue to find God's shelter.

It was always there.

God gave the Torah to Moses, an individual. Moses gave it to the people as individuals. Individuals created the institutions to help us find God when God was always there for us individually. The prophets warned Israel about demanding Kings. Kings were not the answer to approach God. We got Saul. Solomon created the Temple. The Temple fell. We created the synagogue. We created Federations. God gave us the Chochma, the intellect, to manage his world for the better. We took our intellect and made Science God without God.

The Rabbis warn us about going to the synagogue in large groups. They warn us not to kiss the mezuzahs on the doorposts to protect us and the home from evil when we go in from the out.

Plagues, epidemics, even pandemics are not new. They are recorded in the bible. Our response, once the plague had passed, the curse of the dark Angel had flown away, was for the living to celebrate God with Thanks. We did not curse God for not being there. Life continues anew.

Life will continue anew after Coronavirus. I suspect the dog's bark will be much worse than the dog's bite. Don't know for sure but believe so. What I do know for sure is that the institutions we created, the rituals, the amulets which are being sold to protect us from Coronavirus, are not the answer. We have a personal, individual, opportunity to reach out to the Eternal, without rose-colored glasses. And we should, even while we adhere to the best advice possible, social distancing and attentive personal hygiene. We should consider what does it mean during a Pandemic that our rituals our institutions are waved with a hand and blessed by the Chief Rabbis.

Once the Darkness, the hysterically self-inflicted panic has passed, we should review the meaning and usefulness of the career institutions we have created. We should clear the debris for the individual to establish a closer personal relationship to God, reform our calcified, atrophied institutions, and tether the Clay Feet of the know-all Gods of Science.

God has created a dynamic personal world for us. We should embrace it. We should continue to make it better, as God intended us to do from the beginning.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jerry is the president and founder of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, www.JASHP.org. He is the son of Survivors of Buchenwald and Bergen Belsen. He is a former Yeshivah student and served with the IDF in the Sinai. He is the author of over 100 articles in publications ranging from the Jerusalem Post to the Prairie Connection to the San Diego Jewish World. Jerry is frequently interviewed on T.V. and Radio about the American Jewish experience. The Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation has completed projects in 39 US. States and in 5 countries. Over 7,000,000 people annually benefit from one of JASHP's projects. JASHP has completed seven projects in Israel. Five more are in development. Recently, JASHP completed the first-ever historic memorial to the Exodus in Israel, July 2017. The Exodus was known as the "Ship that Launched a Nation". December 2017, the Machal Memorial in Jerusalem to the 5,000 Jewish and non-Jewish volunteers who came to Israel when they needed her most during the War of Independence, was completed. JASHP is working on five new projects in and for Israel. We expect to have them completed in 2020.