



CONGREGATION AGUDATH ACHIM
FREEHOLD JEWISH CENTER

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Shabbat / Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah
October 9, 10 and 11, 2020 / 22 – 23 Tishrei 5781

In the near recent past, our beloved Shul has suffered a Coronavirus setback. I'm thankful to say that this person is on the mend, and we are hopeful that our shul will be open again soon.

Our Shul is a "traditional" one, which leaves the definition vague, and yes these are times with "extenuating circumstances". "Traditional" and "extenuating circumstances" go together when life and death are involved. The Halachah of "Pikuach Nefesh Docheh et HaShabbat", "Saving a life (soul) supersedes Shabbat" is clear. The use of all kinds of devices to save a life are allowable. Convenience or fear does not supersede Shabbat. Just because something may make you feel good does not make it right.

We have just observed and celebrated Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur in the attempt of "cleansing the soul". Sukkot followed with the understanding of G-d's Divine protection by sitting in our huts. The last day of Sukkot Chol HaMoed; Hoshanah Rabbah, is treated like Yom Kippur, and the service leader even wears a Kittel. One wishes another a "gut Kvitel" for this is the final day of "repentance", the "final verdict". If this isn't a directive about following rules (even the ones we do not like or want to change) then what is?

Tomorrow is Shemini Atzeret and we will be observing Yizkor remembering those who have gone before us. As we remember them let us remember tradition. Traditions and customs are, in effect, not Jewish law, but they evoke in us deep attachments with the past. Remember the past and its blessings for it will bless our future.

As we pray for rain on Shemini Atzeret think about its life-giving qualities, its cleansing characteristics, and G-d's Divine Reward and Punishment. With mitzvos rain comes in its due season and without mitzvot, the rain does not come the way it should. Mitzvot are commandments and they are concrete. Are there exceptions? The answer is yes; however it is not based on how one "feels" or what one "wants". It is based on the study, text, precedent, and a "deciding opinion" of "The Sages".

As we look toward Simchat Torah may we be blessed to celebrate G-d's words to us in joy, peace, and good health.

Yizkor will be observed tomorrow, October 10, in the lower parking lot of the Jewish Home for Rehabilitation and Nursing, 1151 West Main Street, Freehold at 11 AM. Please join us.

May everyone have a G'Mar Chatimah Tovah, a Good Shabbos and a Good Yom Tov!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

