



# Congregation Ner Tamid

on the Greenspun Campus for Jewish Life, Learning, and Spiritual Renewal

## *Humidity in the Time of Corona*

If I had a dollar for every time someone told me “But it’s a dry heat” I would be a rich man. Yes, our climate is unlike Florida. The air is dry. And yes, 90 degrees when it is humid is very different than when it is 90 and the air is dry. After 30 plus years in Vegas, I don’t even break a sweat until the thermometer passes 105. And don’t get me started when temperatures reach 110 and above. No matter how you try and describe it, that is HOT!

Expressions such as “It’s a dry heat” are used to not only “sell Las Vegas” to those reluctant to come move here, but to describe our sense of reality when we make our way through the desert heat. Language it turns out is very important in reflecting our sense of self and our values. We tend to forget this, and we should make note of it more often. Words after all, do matter. And if they don’t, they should.

Much has been written about the political divide in our country. There are many reasons for this, beyond the scope of a short essay such as this. But at the heart of the matter is that we often are speaking different languages. Oh we utter the same words, but they don’t mean the same thing at all. And the seeds of distrust and mistrust that have overwhelmed our society in terms of our view of government have bled into every aspect of our lives. Fights at school board meetings over whether children should wear masks and comparing this requirement to the nazis branding Jews with numbers is ridiculous at the outset. Except there are people who passionately believe it to be true. Those who argue that requiring vaccinations which protect everyone is “medical Apartheid” distort not only the definition of Apartheid, they create fear which sews doubt in the minds of people who are already on the fence of introducing a vaccine into their bodies. I have officiated at far too many COVID funerals to have sympathy for this any longer. It has been a heart-breaking year. And the loss amongst family members greater than I can describe.

Societies can be divided and differ as they often do. But they must remain united on their ability to provide protection for its citizens, and protection for its communities. Sometimes choices aren’t easy. And sometimes, they are much easier than we realize if we didn’t let our fear get the best of us.

Thank God we live in a dry heat. One can only imagine what a bit of humidity would do to our comfort level. We might have to sweat and be uncomfortable and find ways to deal with it.

Rabbi Sanford Akselrad