

## Corona Chronicle

### Week 47

Tuesday, Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>

As of today, according to the website of the CDC, we have passed 443,000 deaths in the U.S. from the coronavirus. In two weeks, we will likely hit the half-million mark. I wrote the first one of these “chronicles” on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. It was just ten days after Purim, and therefore pre-Passover. Who would have thought at that time that almost a year later we would still be living in this altered state of existence, gathering only with close family members? I have met up with only two friends during this time, masked, and only outdoors; and twice we had visitors, only two at a time, in our backyard...oh! *and* I also attended several “bring-your-own-sandwich-and-folding-chair” lunches with members of our TBE community back last summer. That’s it. Although Mark and I did see some congregants in person over the High Holidays – in the temple sanctuary – for the most part we have gotten used to “socializing” through our computers, seeing people only on a screen and not in flesh and blood. If someone had written a novel about a society such as ours, the way it is now, 40 years ago, it would definitely have made it onto the “science fiction” shelves of the bookstore.

Of course there are so many things that we take for granted today that would have seemed “futuristic” 40 years ago: personal computers, smart phones, online dating, remote learning, and now, just around the corner, we will soon see solar-powered electric cars, self-driving cars (I can’t help feeling nervous about *that* one), and commercial travel into space (for the very rich only!)...and who knows what other strange phenomena?

Likewise – who could possibly have imagined a presidential administration like the one we have just had for the last four years, ending with that burst of madness in the Capitol Building on January 6<sup>th</sup>? Well, the story has not exactly ended, since the impeachment trial of our 45<sup>th</sup> president is scheduled to begin a week from today. Rather strange, one might think, to hold an impeachment trial for a president who is no longer in office, but since this last desecrating act – the encouragement of his supporters to “go up to the Capitol” and to “fight, fight, fight”- took place so close to the inauguration of President Joe Biden, there wasn’t time to have the Senate trial until after the new president had taken office. You might ask (as many

*are* asking) what is the purpose of going through with this trial, since the former president, Donald Trump, is already a private citizen? And to me the answer is clear: if no action is taken, then we would be saying that any president can commit any crime or other desecration of the office during the last week or two of their administration and know that they would never have to face any consequences, since they are leaving anyway. Since it seems that our federal government is sticking by the strange rule that one cannot indict a sitting president for any crimes committed while in office, that leaves impeachment as the only recourse to address outrageous and/or illegal behavior.

Of course for Donald Trump, this impeachment trial, even should he be convicted (doubtful, considering the partisan politics of the Senate), would not change much for him: he is already out of office; he would not go to prison; he would hardly even lose the uncanny power he seems to have over so many in his party. The only consequence of any significance would be that he would be barred from ever running for or holding any public office again.

But we cannot just let it pass. The storming of our Capitol, leading to the deaths of six people, the imperiling of the lives of many lawmakers and congressional aides, and of the vice president...we cannot just say “Oh, man, I’m glad that’s over! Now we can get back to normal.”

Much of D.C. is still surrounded by 8-foot tall chain lock fencing with coils of wire-razor at the top. When you see it on TV, it makes us look like a country in the grip of a civil war. Which is what many of those who stormed up to the Capitol wanted: a second Civil War. Although they tout their fervent “patriotism,” what is unspoken is that the nation that they are patriots *for* is not the one that *exists*, but rather some *imagined* nation in their mind – especially one that existed *in the past*: one that did *not* offer “liberty and justice [and the right to vote] for *all*,” but only for a white, *Christian* (or what they *think of* as “Christian”) male-dominated society. Thus the harkening back to a past era – “make America great *again*.”

One can’t help but wonder whether our being stuck at home with too much time on our hands (since many people have lost their jobs or livelihoods, or had their hours cut back, or are working from home, due to the pandemic) has helped to create the perfect storm for this horrible situation. Add to that that many people are angry over local and state mandates about social distancing and mask-wearing, and the disruption of learning with the closing of schools during some parts of the pandemic, and the switch to remote learning...the way that Trump’s administration

dealt with the pandemic seems to have only revved up the rise and spread of this deadly disease, causing more sickness, more unemployment, more frustration, and more anger – but all too often this anger is not aimed at those responsible for exacerbating these sad conditions. Instead too many Americans have disappeared down the rabbit holes of crazy conspiracy theories. They imagine some shadowy “deep state,” or a “cabal” of elites – liberal academics, journalists, politicians and Hollywood celebrities, with a few wealthy Jews sprinkled in (preeminently, George Soros and the Rothschilds) – who are either running child-sex-trafficking rings (and drinking the blood of these innocents), or plotting to turn the United States into a communist-socialist totalitarian state. And many of these influential people, are also, according to these theories, worshipers of Satan!

What has happened to our country?! Now, while it may be true that only a small percentage of Americans have bought into “Q” (7% according to one poll conducted by *Wired* magazine in October), and within this group, only a small subset really believe *all* of its crazy claims – still, look what this group, together with other frightening militia- and white-nationalist groups have wrought!

Some say we are living in a “post-truth” era. But of course truth can always still be found. The question is whether people are committed to trying to find out what is actually true, or whether they would rather just embrace as “factual” whatever supports their emotional/cultural/economic/political interests.

Of course no one can be an expert in all fields, and we cannot personally investigate every news story as if we were all investigative reporters. We have to rely on the expertise of others. So how does one know which sources to trust?

While even seasoned journalists can sometimes be misled, the general rule of thumb would probably be to recognize that there is a reason why mainstream news sources such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe*, *Time Magazine*, etc. have stayed in business as reputable news sources for as long as they have. They employ hard-working journalists who know that their stories will be fact-checked, and they work in an atmosphere where other journalists from other papers or magazines or news outlets will also be working on the same news developments, and so in that way their facts will be cross-checked by competing journalists.

The internet, of course, offers us access to an overwhelming variety of “sources” of news – some of it good information. Some of it based on hearsay or imagination.

Some of it downright crazy or deliberately misleading, perhaps even hateful and intended to provoke violence.

Most people can probably use their common sense. But with at least one QAnon believer having been elected to the House of Representatives, one wonders whether common sense might not be in short supply these days.

Conspiracy-thinking, I want to add, is not just a phenomenon on the political Right. It thrives on the Left (especially the *far* Left) as well. One element that tends to crop up in conspiracy-mongering, whether on the Right or on the Left, is some type of anti-Semitism...why is this? Somehow we Jews have been blamed for over a hundred years both for being the “international bankers” that run the world *and* for wanting to turn the world into a socialist totalitarian international state. We have been blamed by the Church for murdering God’s “son,” Jesus (and a host of other crimes), and by Muslims for an assortment of crimes (many of them taken over from old Christian slanders), especially crimes against Muslim children.

Well, this is a huge subject that I have neither the expertise nor the time for here. It is just curious how sometimes the far Right and the far Left stretch their ideas of “reality” so far that the two supposedly opposite camps end up meeting on common ground. Back in 2019 when the newly-elected Rep. Omar Ilhan (D-MN) asserted that U.S. policy towards Israel was motivated by financial concerns, saying “It’s all about the Benjamins,” and accused Israel-supporters of “pushing allegiance to a foreign country,” she actually received an approving tweet from former KKK grand wizard David Duke, who wrote “Omar is right...about Israel.”

Of course none of this is to say that everything that the Jewish State does is always just and right, nor that there aren’t any rich Jewish pedophiles (Jeffrey Epstein comes to mind) or other powerful figures who happen to be Jewish who are responsible for grave human suffering (think Stephen Miller, to our deep shame!).

Like all peoples, we contain a spectrum of individuals on the ethics-rainbow: from full-out *tzaddikim* (the wholly righteous) to complete *r’sha’im* (the outlandishly wicked), but also like most peoples, most of us are somewhere in the middle, trying to live good and decent lives, but stumbling now and then – then, hopefully, repenting, and trying again.

### **Wednesday, Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>**

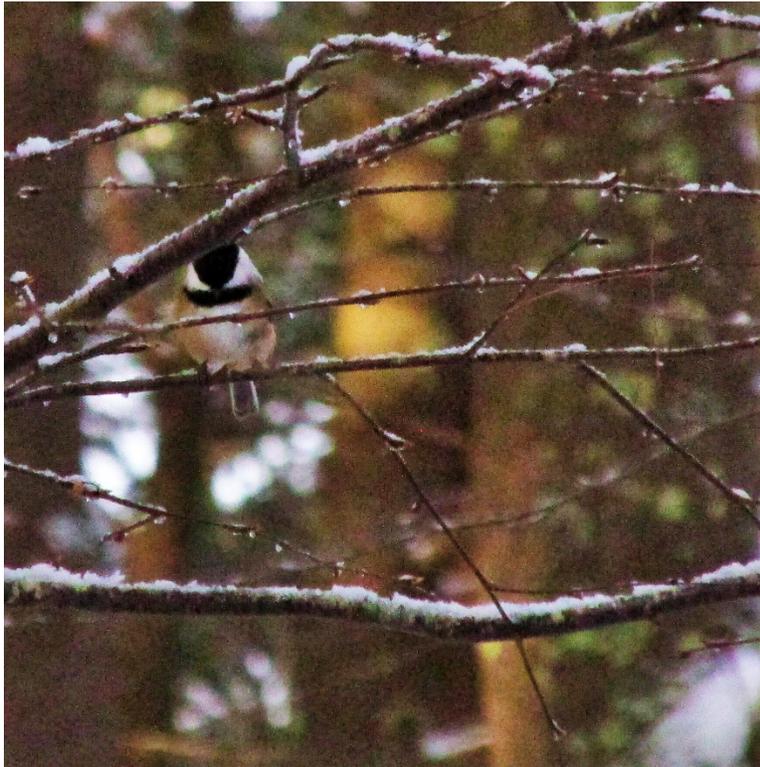
The debate about whether the Republicans in the House of Representatives will somehow censure Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), or perhaps remove her from the two committees that she sits on is still not settled. What is all the ruckus about? It has to do with her outrageous support of QAnon; her history of endorsing suggestions on social media that call for a “bullet to the head” of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi; her suggesting that some of the 2018 California wildfires were caused by “space lasers” (financed by the Rothschilds); and that the Parkland and Sandy Hook school shootings were “faked”...and also with her instance on being allowed to carry a gun with her into the House chambers, and refusing to submit to the metal detector as she enters the Capitol Building. Meanwhile, Greene retains more support from fellow Republican representatives than does Rep. Liz Cheney (R.WY), who is currently out of favor for having had the temerity to vote to impeach Donald Trump when the House took their vote on January 13<sup>th</sup>.

Yes, it is a mad, mad, mad, mad world!

So it helped to take a hike this morning, even though it wasn't easy going on the icy part of Wilson Road near the reservoir (which gets lightly plowed, but not sanded or salted). I turned off down one of the forest paths at one point when the puddles got too large to navigate (since they were beginning to melt), and followed a variety of wildlife tracks (deer and some kind of canine paw prints, either coyote or fox) down to the edge of the reservoir, Watuppa Pond.

It was not one of my more “magical” walks, since the snow was far from pristine, and the light overhead was an indeterminate “blah,” but I did enjoy some unusual bird sounds: the trill of a red-bellied woodpecker, a hard-to-describe whistling-clucking of a raven flying overhead, and the incredibly cheerful fluttering-sound of the chickadees flying near me as I passed by a stone pillar where Lynne (a woman I know through a local environmental group) regularly puts out sunflower seeds and suet for her feathered friends along the forested part of Wilson Road. When I returned home to eat lunch, I read in the paper a letter which responded to an article I had missed (on Jan 31<sup>st</sup>) about the appearance of a snowy owl in New York's Central Park! Of course I looked the article up online, and there she was (it was a female owl) – hanging out on a sandy baseball diamond in Central Park (which, due to the reseeding around it, had a fence keeping the hundreds of people who flocked to the park to see her at a good distance away). Well, the politics in this nation may be going crazy, but at least the birds (some of them, at any rate) are

thriving. It is always good to look for some things, however small, that we can be thankful for. But for me, birds are not just “small” things: they are both our “canaries in the coal mine,” which is to say, *indicators* of the health of our environment, and also *messengers from heaven*, bringing down with them when they flutter down to earth some song and shine from the celestial realms. No wonder we love them so much.



*Chickadee working on opening a seed on a snowy branch off Wilson Rd, Watuppa Reserve.*