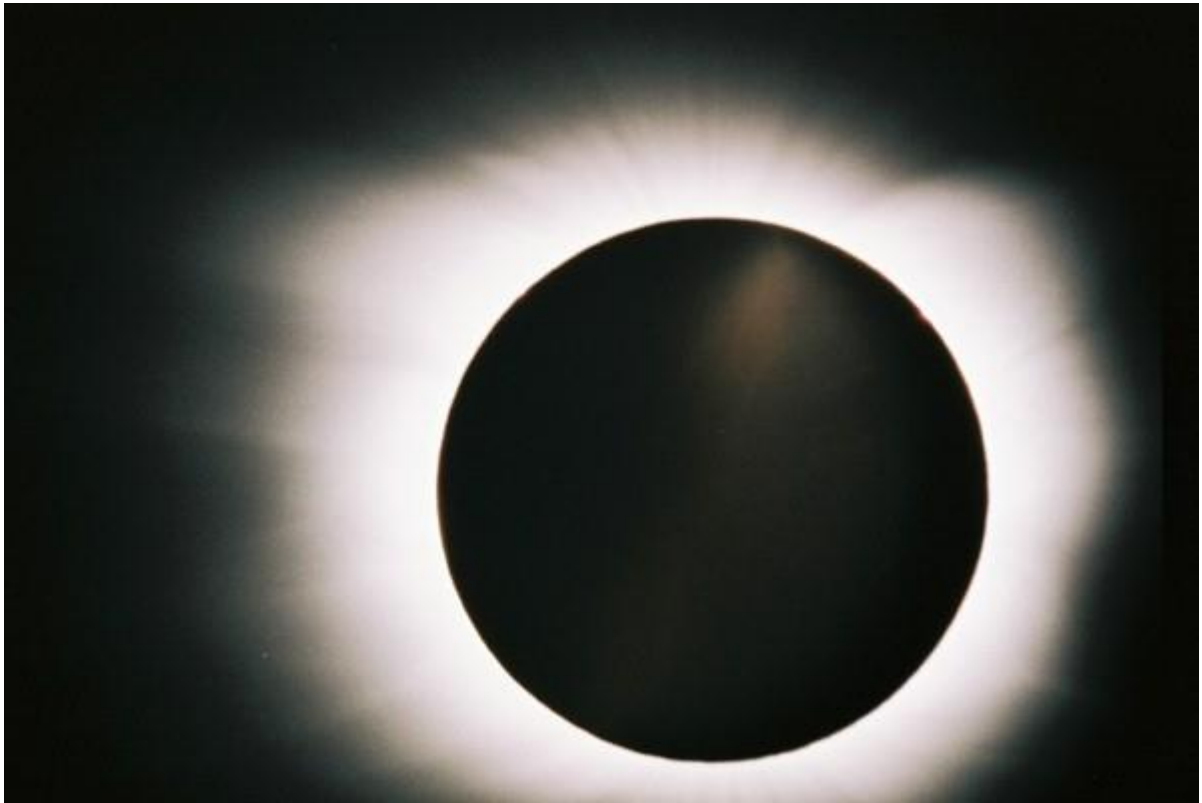


## Friday Evening Message – 24 April 2020



*Total eclipse of the sun, Anatalya, Turkey. This view of totality has been described as 'the eye of God'. Philip, 2006.*

I imagine many will be feeling fearful in these tough times. Not a pleasant feeling, but it's not intended to be. In fact it is important that it should be unpleasant. Fear is programmed into us and serves to enhance our safety. How would we fare if we were not concerned by a lion charging towards us, a black mamba under our chair, a grenade landing at our feet or a deadly virus ripping through the world? Darwin might have said that if you have no fear then you will expose yourself to danger and you will not survive. Indeed, today, those who ignore scientific advice are likely to become infected and possibly die. There is also a moral element to this. Not only do some expose themselves to this virus, but they thereby expose others: family, friends and medical staff.

However, I don't think abject, all-consuming fear is good for you either. It's certainly not good for your mental health. If you are sitting at home doing it in your gutkas then you really are not helping yourself or others around you. The situation isn't going to go away in a hurry, but you can change the way you think about it and you can think about how you have behaved, do behave and will behave.

Humans were designed for an outdoor existence, so I suggest you do get out into daylight and fresh air every day, even if it's only sitting on a chair outside your back door. There are two complementary sayings which come to mind: 'a trouble shared is a trouble halved' and 'misery loves company', so get on the phone or internet and grumble to all your family and friends. After all, it is the Jewish thing to do.

Travel is a bit of a problem at the moment. Do you remember Terry Waite, the archbishop of Canterbury's Middle East envoy who was kidnapped in Beirut and held captive for more than five years? During one interview he was asked how he coped. He replied that he went on holiday, in his head. You could do the same. Say that you do not want to be disturbed, go and lie down, close your eyes and re-live places you've

been to and nice people you've met. Or you could imagine going to tea with Goldie Hawn or Miriam Margolyes.

So what did I mean about 'behaving' three paragraphs above? The actor Paul Eddington (Jim Hacker in 'Yes, minister') was being interviewed on television when he was terminally ill. He was asked how he would like to be remembered. He thought for a moment and replied, "Most people do a lot of harm. I'd like people to say 'he did very little harm'". If the worst should befall you, how would you like to be remembered? As a self-centred, mean-minded cuss or as a kind person with a generous spirit? It's hard work, but we all need to try harder. Time may be short. Start now. There isn't a moment to be lost. I mean you, and I mean me too. This is not my humour. This is serious. This is your/our reputation.

And if all else fails, remember we are British. Have a nice cup of tea. It worked during the war so it should work now too.

Philip

**Norwich Liberal Jewish Community**

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