

Before COVID-19, I drove a lot. As you probably know, I live in the Bronx and it's a 30-mile trip to and from Temple Sinai. In a typical year, I put about 20,000 miles on my trusty Mazda. I love my car and I love driving. However, when it comes to my car's GPS, I have serious trust issues. My GPS drives me crazy. Often, it falsely alerts me that there are major traffic delays on my route and that I will be egregiously late to my destination. Sometimes, it tries to steer me on circuitous paths that will undoubtedly take longer than if I just stay the course and wait out the congestion on the road. It frequently derails my forward trajectory and leaves me more confused and irritated than the traffic itself. Over the years, I have learned this about my GPS and I have taken to using Waze on my phone as a way to compare travel reports and alternate routes.

Why am I telling you this? On the morning of Yom Kippur, I hopped into my car and headed north for Temple Sinai. I left at 7:30am, hoping to be at the building well in advance of my 8:30am rehearsal with the High Holy Day quartet. No sooner had I pulled out of my driveway when my GPS tells me there are major delays and that I won't arrive at my destination until 9:22am - mere minutes before services are scheduled to begin. My GPS starts suggesting alternate routes that will take almost as long as the original route, including all the supposed traffic. I start to panic – should I take the back roads, many of which I have never driven on before? Or should I remain on my current path and hope the traffic will clear up?

In the end, I ignored my GPS and stayed on my trusted route. There were a few minutes of traffic, but not nearly as much as my GPS had predicted. I made it to the temple by 8:22am – with plenty of time to rehearse and get ready for the service.

As I pulled into the temple driveway, I laughed at the metaphor that came to mind: my GPS is like that person in our lives who tends to blow things out of proportion, who makes mountains out of mole hills. My GPS is like the person who distracts us from our true goals and steers us off of our trusted path. My GPS is like those people in our lives who confuse and infuriate us unnecessarily. Yes, my GPS is attached to my car, I can't remove it from my life (unless I get a new car), but I can choose when to pay attention to it and how I respond to it. And, when I choose to engage with it to plot my route, I can be sure to use Waze to verify its accuracy.

That morning, I learned a life lesson that extends beyond my challenging relationship with my GPS: We need not get sucked into the drama of those around us. We can observe and evaluate and then choose how to respond. Yes, we can accept input from others, but ultimately, we must choose our own path and stick to it. And, usually, the most direct route is the most efficient, even if there are small delays along the way. May we have the wisdom to maintain a similar attitude towards the challenging people in our lives, may the path ahead be clear, and may we arrive at the appointed time.

**B'Shira, in song,
Cantor Micah Morgovsky**