

## Transcript of Interview with Miriam by Kit Heintzman

**Interviewee:** Miriam

**Interviewer:** Kit Heintzman

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**Location (Interviewee):** Austin, Texas

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Transcribed By:** Angelica S Ramos

### **Some of the things we discussed include:**

Living with diabetes and having a constant reminder of the threat of death. Shemira; working as a shomeret. Honoring the dead and consoling the survivors. Working in death support on call 24/6, available at all times except the sabbath. Living with husband during the pandemic, husband testing positive with asymptomatic COVID. The synagogue going online. Volunteering as a hospice visitor; the visiting program shutting down during the pandemic. Seeing a patient in a nursing home in October 2019, patient visiting daughter through a window. Dying of loneliness. Comparisons between Christian and Jewish spiritualities. Helping family members save money on funeral expenses. Having family members who chose not to get vaccinated and died leaving behind a wife and children; unvaccinated family members congregating at his funeral. Early reactions to masking in the pandemic. Belly dancing and going to shows before the pandemic shut them down. Bringing these belly dancing shows to nursing homes, and nursing homes shutting down programming. Practicing languages. Electricity and the Sabbath during the pandemic. Changes in observing the Sabbath pre- and mid-pandemic; changes in teaching Hebrew pre- and mid-pandemic. The mourner's Kaddish. Celebrating Rosh Hashanah pre- and mid-pandemic. Nursing homes shutting down all programming. The erosion of democracy and rising fascism. Abortion, Roe v. Wade, male contraception. Combative relationships with sickness and dying. Environmental damage and the funerary industry. Active listening and being heard without judgment. Difficulty accessing vaccination the first time: difficulty with online booking, long drive, quick and easy on arrival; smoother second vaccination. Rumor's spreading and being believed as facts, people making decision based on false information. Distrust of media and BigPharma; how one comes to distrust certain sources.

**Miriam** 00:01

Hello, my name is Miriam. Today is June 8, June 9 2022. And it is 11:01am in Austin, Texas.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:13

And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under Creative Commons License attribution noncommercial sharealike?

**Miriam** 00:22

Yes, I do.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:24

Thank you so much. Would you please start by just telling us a little bit about yourself? What would you want whoever's listening to this to know about you?

**Miriam 00:32**

Okay, um, well, um, I have had type one diabetes, since I was 15. I came very close to death at my diagnosis, and have been doing very well ever since. But I think that because I have this daily reminder, it wasn't like a car accident, which I scraped by and survived. And then the, you know, the danger went away. It's when you live with some a chronic disease that can kill you, it's every day of your life, you feel like, at least I should say, I feel like, I'm just all I need to do is be out of my medication for a few days or weeks. And, and so I'm always in the valley of the shadow of death. I think that is one reason that I've been I don't want to say obsessed but very interested in deaths all my life. I am also the coordinator of an Austin, a city wide group of people who serve Jewish deceased by sitting with them and praying for them around the clock from death to burial. And I've become sort of a national figure on the in that community, for getting it organized and inspiring people to do that. And I think that mostly out of that, out of that work, I got interested in doula work and exposed to it. So I'm now training to become an end of life doula, and working towards that.

**Kit Heintzman 01:58**

Tell me a story about your life during the pandemic.

**Miriam 02:02**

I had it easy. Um, I, you know, I lived only with my husband we had, we're in a smaller house now, but we had a very big house. So even when he was tested positive, although he was an asymptomatic, we wonder if you really, if it was a false positive, we could stay away from each other for you know, the whole as long as we needed to. I had been self employed most of my life. So I've worked at home. So isolation, physical isolation comes rather easy to me. The one thing that changed was my synagogue went from, you know, celebrations or and services in person to online. As far as my Doula work was my well, okay. As far as my Doula work is concerned, I should say that I more at this point, a hospice volunteer visitor to to terminal patients, rather than a doula. I figured I would become a volunteer at hospice, to get a leg in the door, get a foot in the door, and maybe network and find ways that I can do this. And I was able to do one doula client practice through my hospice work. But I started to train for that in with one hospice in October of 2019. And the hospice that I really wanted to work with, gave me an excellent training in February 2020. And I think we were just beginning some people in by the end of the in person training, which they had, which was terrific. They had us wearing masks. I got one, one patient through them to visit. I visited her once, and then the the visiting program shutdown. So So I've had very little opportunity to, you know, to even do my hospice work. During the pandemic, that was one that was the hospice, I most want to work with. My other hospice, left it up to the patients to tell us if and nursing homes to say if they wanted visitors. So my visits got more restricted. Of course, I had to, you know, social distancing, you can't hug and things like that. But, but I could still visit, sometimes going outdoors, on the patio or on the porch, or sometimes just being in a larger area, and of course, with face masks all the time. I have one patient, my very first patient who I started to see before the pandemic, so this would have been October of 2019. She had had a stroke. She was in a nursing home kind of a depressing nursing home. Not a terrible place, but not a cheerful place. And she ended up getting out of the hospice program because she wanted physical therapy to be able to move better she had had a stroke when they shut down the visitation program. Even her daughter couldn't come in, they had to visit through a window. But the patient was blind. So there wasn't a and she had a stroke. So she could not say much more than yes and no. So this was really tough on her and I got a, an email from her daughter, I guess in July of 2020, saying that she had died and she believes she died of loneliness. And I don't doubt it. So that was a sad ending for that patient.

**Kit Heintzman** 05:30

I have so many questions.

**Miriam** 05:33

Go on

**Kit Heintzman** 05:33

I guess I'll start with what is it that drew, you talked about wanting to work in one hospice more than another? What is it that draws you to a particular hospice?

**Miriam** 05:44

I, well, okay, this the particular hospice that I wanted to work with is called hospice Austin. It's considered the gold standard of hospices in Austin. It's the only nonprofit hospice. And compared I'm not going to mention the name of the other hospice I work with, and you'll change my name in any in any publications of anything I say, correct. I'm not going to mention the name. But I felt that the training the training was, they handed me 128 page, Xerox of a manual to read a large part of which was OSHA regulations on how to clean up chemical spills. So that there was no in person training, I didn't feel like there was any info they would not give me that give me just skeletal information about every patient. And I just felt that I got better training with hospice Austin. And when they did give me a name of somebody to connect with, they gave me great detail.

**Kit Heintzman** 06:44

What brought you to hospice work?

**Miriam** 06:48

Well, I had I guess, I, you know, as I said, I had been doing work with the ritual needs of Jewish deceased since 19 since before 1999, what we do, the area that I work in, is after somebody dies, somebody in the community has to get people to sit with that with the deceased at the funeral home, around the clock from death to burial. So there's a lot of shifts to fill. And, and what we do mostly is just maintain a mindful presence for the deceased to sit and read Psalms, and read other Jewish or appropriate reading, to help them to make that soul feel like they're still connected to the Jewish community. This, we still care about them as they make their way on their journey, which they might be confused about. Because they're not used to being out of the body. They're busy saying goodbye to their lifelong partner, the body. And the body is has its own concerns, because it's about to go into a grave that it's not familiar with. So all of this is done to consulting, to honor the deceased, and consult the mourners. I started doing that myself sometime in the 1990s. And then I got hoodwinked into being the coordinator. That's a whole other story. And it's become my baby over time. And over time, we've grown the program to have many, many people, I don't get to do it as often as I'd like to, but I help other people do it. So in a way, what a what a, what a doula does us me about hospice, but I'm going to tell you a little bit about doula. What a doula does is not take care of everything for the deceased themselves. What they ideally do is help the deceased figure out what they want to do, what they can do, help the family understand and get empowered to do to support that. And the ideal thing would be that when the time comes, the family feels equipped to go go it without, you know, of course, you can be there at the end or even after the end, that's fine. But but it's not my job to do everything jumping in. I'm sorry about that. There's nothing I can do about my barking, can you hear me? Okay? There's nothing, I'm not doing anything, I can do that. So, you know, ideally, you help the family play that plays a key role in that. And in my work with my Jewish community, I realized just a week or two ago that what I'm doing is helping other

people do these rituals that they want to do, but you know, they, they're shy about it, or they don't know how to go about it, and I can usher them into, into these rituals that are about loving kindness at the end of life. So I guess that was a springboard for me to get into working with deceased in general. Also, because of my work in this field. In the Jewish community. It's 24 Six, except for the Sabbath. I'm on duty when I'm on duty. I'm on duty around the clock. I can get a call at any time about a death. So a lot of times I'll be out with non Jewish friends and it's get a call from the rabbi and say I gotta go, you know, I've got to go home and take care of this. And so I've become like the Death concerns to a lot of my non Jewish friends. And that made me think that you know, I have something to offer and maybe I could offer some, I don't remember where I heard about death doula work, I think it was through a conference with the Jewish burial society. And but well, maybe this is something I retired. I'm a retired translator. And as I was moving away from translation, I thought, Well, what do I want to do now. So it was the time that

**Kit Heintzman** 10:32

I'd love to hear something about how you experience it differently, working with clients and their families, working just with one person dying, and sitting with someone after death.

**Miriam** 10:32

I had only had one, okay, let's take the last part first, because that'll be shortest. I've only had one occasion where I was present when somebody died. It was a hospice patient that I had never met. And I was called at the last minute and you know, rushed over his family was starting to get there. When I went in the room, he was going to speak, which is normal, I quietly introduced myself and said that I hope that he has a good journey. And, and I sang some songs to him, love different languages. And I've got a bunch of folk songs that I sing in different languages. So rather than saying something in English, which may or may not trigger something in his memory that might be appropriate or not, I sing an Indonesian lullaby to him quietly, and then his daughter got there, and his other daughter got there. And I, since they were, you know, I didn't want to interrupt their experience. So I just went as far back into the room and kind of hid myself behind a wheelchair, so that I'd be there if they needed me. But not like running the show or taking over or making them think that had to talk to me, or anything like that. Apparently, this was very consoling to them, because after he died, they all hugged me and said how grateful they was that I was there. I didn't think I really did much of anything. But apparently, it was good for the family. And I left shortly after he died because he had his family there. That's my only experience with being somebody with somebody after death. What were the others? Others questions about how I worked with families and how I work with patients?

**Kit Heintzman** 12:41

But also when you were doing the care work for Jewish people after death and sitting with the body.

**Miriam** 12:47

Oh that

**Kit Heintzman** 12:48

What that felt like for you

**Miriam** 12:48

Ok, ok.

**Miriam** 12:51

All right. So when I, I worked very, I almost never worked with the families themselves there. I get a call from the [inaudible]. Let me see if I don't know what I can do about that idiot dog.

**Kit Heintzman** 13:07

I love it. I love it. It's a part of like, what our lives are like right now

**Miriam** 13:11

Okay, thank you.

**Kit Heintzman** 13:12

I wanted to ask, can you remind me what the word is for sitting with the body and

**Kit Heintzman** 13:16

Shemira

**Kit Heintzman** 13:19

Thank you.

**Miriam** 13:20

Shira, which means guardian or watching or protecting. It can also be like a neighborhood watch type of thing in England, there's a group of Shomrim gardeners who, who guard Muslim mosques. When when there's they're in danger. And the Muslims help guide the synagogues when they have high holidays and stuff and so forth. But in our context, it means watching meaning watching the body it started as a way to, to keep enemies from coming grave robbers, animals, critters, hurting the body and stuff like that. And also to and over time, as we've gotten funeral homes that we you know, we we trust to take good physical care of people, it's become more spiritual thing. So I almost never end up working with the family the difference is when it's when the deceased is a relative of somebody that's on my team. So they're they themselves are people who are Shomrim who go and sit with other deceased and for them, it's a really deep experience when it's their loved one and they know that that I'm making sure that people are sitting with that person around the clock, so they won't be alone. We don't have wakes. So, yeah, so that's my only experience with the families when I am when I'm organizing when I'm helping people take shifts. I feel mostly stressed and harried. I want to, you know, I do feel sometimes motivated when I see people signing up without being asked, or you know, when, when shifts filled without my having to do anything, we've got an online system for this. But when I make phone calls, it's like, okay, how many phone calls in a row am I gonna make before I take a break or hang up and so forth. I feel like the Angel of Death. Sometimes when I call somebody on the phone, or somebody on my list of a callback for any reason, they hear my voice and they say, oh, who died? No, I'm just calling about a bake sale. When I'm doing it myself, I feel in a combination of things, I always start by going to the door of the cold room where the person is usually the person is not already body washed. And in their casket, you know, where I can see the casket. And I'll tell the person, that who I am, and that I hope that they're at peace. And, you know, I hope that I can give them consolation on their journey. I've had people know, you know, as I said, the tradition is to sing to read Psalms. But you know, other reading material, other biblical materials. But I had one lady that said, it wasn't one of mine, it was somebody that had told me about a story that you're in this one woman went to sit with another woman who had passed away, and she

was compelled to sing show tunes on her shift. And she thought this was a terrible, you know, why? You know what an you know, how disrespectful how awful, but she felt compelled to sing show tunes, rather than read psalms and, and so forth. She later met the son afterwards, I think, you know, at the end of her shift, he happened to show up, and they were talking about it, and he said that his mother had been a show girl. And that was the highlight of her life, and she loved her songs. So that was interesting to hear that she had had that experience. I haven't had experiences like that. Um, a lot of times I choose reading material that helps me, helps me think about the person on their journey, I think I picture the person who is usually a stranger, slowly moving forward in, in a cloudy way, I guess that's the image that mostly comes up to me. If I did know the person, I might tell him a joke. Or think about memories that we had together or something like that. That's about it. And sometimes I fall asleep.

**Kit Heintzman 17:27**

What does spirituality mean to you?

**Miriam 17:31**

Oh, in Judaism that's more complex and in Christianity. Because we have such a communal life. That that's a question I'll have to think about. The Jewish let's put it this way. And I subscribe to this. I chose Judaism as an adult, I'm a first generation Jew. In Christianity, and these are broad, you know, traditional definitions, a lot has changed in in the last 30 years and 30 to 50 years, a lot has, you know, been rethought. But I think that Christianity has expressions that indicate that this world is a stumbling block for the Spirit, we have, you know, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. We are in this world, but not of it. And there's a sense that when the body leaves, when the soul leaves the body, it goes straight into heaven, or to the next step. And you know, with no regrets with no looking back, they're just joyfully joining God. In paganism, the idea is that the world is already a sacred place, that the natural world has its own spirit, and that we will do better to connect with the spirit of the earth and just do what comes naturally. And the Jewish idea is more than that. And I hear that the Muslim idea is similar, that the the world is that we are here to sanctify the world, the physical world, we are here to do. Judaism has a lot of commandments that have to do with eating clothes, how you spend your time, how you hygiene, how you shave, when you shave, so forth and so on. And I think that the point of all this is to sanctify the natural world, which is good, but not you know, God said the world is good, but not great. Not necessarily sanctified. So we are here as humans to raise the world to a higher level. And I guess that's my spiritual, that's the, the bedrock of my spirituality. How that comes out in real life. Who knows I you know, I try to keep coming through and I try to keep the Sabbath. I try to keep the rules. And that's how I express a lot of spirituality. People, my friends think I have this special relationship with God. But, and I'm not sure I do you know, I'm not we were we were partners. I'm the junior partner. And, you know, I just wanted to say something about that. I feel like when we say that we're the children of God, we should remember that, you know, what age children? Are we, are we infants that need to be bottle fed, where God has to do everything for us? Or are we adults that need to get into the family business. And when one of those kids is going to be a lawyer and take care of the legal aspects, and the other one, you know, maybe is more a physical person, and he's gonna paint the store and another one will do the accounting and so forth. And we all have a role to play in this family business, which is improving the world. And God is the senior partner.

**Kit Heintzman 20:51**

Tell me a story about your life during the pandemic.

**Miriam 20:54**

My, my life during the pandemic? Well, okay, the big thing, the big thing, I was gonna say that really nothing happened to me. I was, I'm kind of a loner anyway. So I don't I didn't have that much trouble. Without my friends around. I have a couple of texts. Can I just take a look and just see if they're urgent?

**Kit Heintzman 21:15**

Absolutely.

**Miriam 21:17**

Nope, nope, nope. Okay. But I'm remembering now a major thing that happened. I have a brother, I have a couple of siblings, I guess that didn't get vaccinated. And my brother, who was 56 years old, and I found out after he got sick, that he wasn't vaccinated, came down with COVID, to the point where he was in the emergency room. And at the beginning, I thought, you know, I can't wait for him to get better. So I can connect him up the head and say, What is wrong with you? Why didn't you get vaccinated, and I don't know if I don't know if I'm talking to somebody that shares my feelings about this. Unfortunately, after a month, being mostly in the emergency room, and then rehabilitation, and so forth. Back in the emergency room, he died. I got the call on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, I was at home tuning into my Rosh Hashanah services, which is a major gathering. I was doing this on YouTube, sorry, on Zoom, when that call came in saying that, so in other words, because of COVID, when my brother died of COVID, I was zooming in rather than with my congregation in person, thanks to COVID. And he passed away. He was 56 years old and left 32 year old wife and two little kids. So that was, that was a major, a major. That's the major event the major loss for me. During the pandemic, I went to the funeral in Atlanta, and came up with cousins, who also were not vaccinated and not wearing masks and hugging people, including me. So that was not um, that was that was hard to understand. I've reconciled myself to thinking that he simply made a tragic miscalculation of his of his own risk. I don't believe that he would have knowingly left his two children without a father, if he had known how sick he was going to get. I don't know what his reason was for not vaccinating. But, but I was because of my experience over the over the many years that I've been working in this Jewish community thing. I've come I've learned a lot about foreign homes. If you know I might be able to get him to stop if you give me a minute [referring to the dog]. Felix. I don't know if I can mute myself. I don't I don't know. But anyway, get done that Felix Yes.

**Miriam 24:05**

Come on. No. Felix come on up. He's barking at the other dogs. You're gonna get that. You gotta get that it's okay.

**Miriam 24:21**

If he sits on my lap, he'll be better. When you're coming to tell us Come here. You're a good boy.

**Miriam 24:28**

It's the other dog isn't there? He might conduct. Alright. I was talking I guess because I during the course that I've been back and forth in funeral homes and learning more and more about funeral homes and how they operate. Through my my context in the Jewish burial society world. I was able to to help my sister in law plan my brother's funeral and save a lot of money. I zoomed in on there on her conversation with the funeral home and she didn't know, for example, she was going to get a coffin that she was going to have my brother cremated which was her choice. And they were showing her different could the cremation coffin for \$1,500 or something? And I said, well, can you rent it? She she wouldn't have thought of this first of all, because she's grieving. So as I but she was

grieving more, it was more her life changing. And she doesn't know what she doesn't know, that you don't need legally to have a coffin. And they said, no, we don't rent them. I said, well, if you have a cardboard casket, if it's just gonna go up in flames, and they said, No, we don't have cardboard caskets. So I said, does she need a cas, does he need a casket? Can he be put on a rolling table with a blanket over them? And they said, Yes. This is stuff that funeral homes will not tell you if you don't ask and pursue it. So my, you know, I, you know, laid it out for my sister in law. And she chose to go with the rolling table. With just a nice quilt over him. He's in a suit, nice quilt over him and then cremation. So she saved a bunch of money. And there were other things that we saved some money on, and other things where she was able, I was able to get her things that she hadn't thought she might want, that she did want. So that was a satisfying thing to be able to help my family that way. Because I happen to have this inside knowledge of how funeral homes work, and what you really need, and what you don't really need.

**Kit Heintzman 26:39**

Do you remember when you first heard about COVID-19?

**Miriam 26:45**

I'm trying to remember I remember, maybe hearing about it the way I had heard about SARS and pig flu or whatever, it was way back when. And I thought, okay, you know, this is another one. And I remember seeing an Asian woman in the supermarket wearing a mask. And I thought, well, that's ridiculous. You know, okay, to each their own. And, you know, I went about my business. But, you know, I don't I don't have a clear remember the first time. But I remember thinking, well, this is, you know, another one of those things. And, you know, just see how it plays out.

**Kit Heintzman 27:20**

Was there a moment where it started to feel more serious?

**Miriam 27:24**

Well, yeah, sure. When, you know, as the death tolls started to rise, and you know, we saw how contagious it was, and how quick it happened. I sure I took it seriously very, very quickly.

**Kit Heintzman 27:41**

What was your day to day looking like pre pandemic,

**Miriam 27:44**

Pre pandemic? Well, as I said, I, I live with just my husband, I have been retired for a couple of years now. So before I retired before the pandemic, so that didn't change my work life. And I would either go to I spend my time, working at home working on my languages, I love to refresh my languages I've learned over over the years, I've got Duolingo going on, and I read a paragraph, one page a day of a bunch of different languages that I like to do, walk my dogs, see my friends, I'm a belly dancer. [inaudible] you know that I was used to belly dance. I retired from that a couple years ago. And I said, You know what, my best days are over, I don't want to be the one that gets the pity applause so I'm getting off the stage. But I still would I still go to shows. And so before the pandemic, I would go to two shows, a month plus some special events and meet friends there and you know, go out for dinner afterwards, and so forth and so on. Plus synagogue life, mostly The Sabbath, I would go once a week, at least once a week, and afterwards, I'd give a class in Hebrew. That was a volunteer thing on so Saturday



morning was spent hours because our services lasts for hours in the sanctuary and then lunch, delicious lunch with all my friends and then go off and have a little study Hebrew session, and then go home and take a nap or read or walk the dogs or look around and see my patients I typically see one or two patients a week. And I don't know what else shopping and gardening and home improvement painting my house all kinds of stuff. That was before the pandemic.

**Kit Heintzman 29:31**

And how did that change after the pandemic?

**Miriam 29:33**

Okay, after the pandemic, the Belly dance just shut right down. So that whole social life shut down. The synagogues shut down. It was for a long time we were doing just it just online. You couldn't even go into drop off stuff. My classes at the synagogue were done online. Instead of in person. Which means now this this class I have, I had a real seat of the pants approach to it where I would just during services, I would decide what I would do is take a verse from the Hebrew that from the Torah, the biblical readings that we do every week that the students could handle, knowing that some of the words also appear in the prayer book, or in modern Hebrew, or in an Arabic word they might know or in a Spanish word they might know. And I would just on the spontaneously go, pick that verse and then say, oh, look in here, it shows up in another form in this prayer that we see every day that you're more familiar with. And guess what it's the root of the word. It's word of word Bismillah, in Bohemian Rhapsody or something like that. So in other words, I didn't have to have anything prepared, and we don't write on the Sabbath. So I didn't have to, you know, nobody's writing and I, you know, didn't, but when I went online, now, I know, we can't all just all have our own books in front of us, because not everybody has the same book. So now I've got to write things down and share the screen and prepare my lessons ahead of time. That was a change. Other than that, you know, my life didn't change all that much. So less socializing. More time alone, but I already spent a lot of time alone.

**Kit Heintzman 31:22**

Did observing the laws of Sabbath changed during a pandemic?

**Miriam 31:26**

Other than well, before the pandemic, I used to get dressed, to go to services. I used to dress both top and bottom to go to services. After the pandemic, I would make sure that whatever was going to be visible on the screen was, you know, was appropriate. But maybe wear pajama bottoms with my tunic on top, something like that. What else this, the Sabbath is a day of rest. And the way I will oh, I should say this, my version of doing this, and we have an expression "two Jews, three opinions" so everything I'm telling you is not necessarily going to be agreed upon by other people that you asked the same question theyd say that's ridiculous. And there's and that's their answer is going to be just as Jewish as mine. But I try to eliminate the use of electricity and electronics on the Sabbath. I liked it to be face to face. So just getting back to the basics, getting back to, you know, just letting the letting all your connections, rest. Take a break from the world and remind yourself that A- you don't need you're not a slave to the world and B- you're not that necessary to the world, the world can can go on without you. If you take a break, nobody's gonna, you know, the sun's not gonna stop rising in the morning because you didn't get on your computer and answer emails. After the pandemic started. And now my now our synagogue decided that it was more important to allow people to keep in touch somehow we can't we don't know how long this is going to last. Just gotta be three weeks, maybe we can just say so long to each other and see you soon. But if it's a we don't

know when it's going to end, we have to do something. So my congregation decided to have services online, even on the Sabbath. This opens up now, now I'm on the computer on the Sabbath. And because I had already scheduled a class on the Sabbath, that class continued on the Sabbath after an, online, after the semester ended. I no longer did the Saturday I no longer did the online class on Saturday. I did it during the week. Because basically it's a violation of the Sabbath to be using your your computers on the Sabbath. So that changed. And once you know, once you get once you start using your electronics on the Sabbath for synagogue stuff, it's not that easy to well, while I'm here, let me just check my Facebook page or check those emails or so forth and so on. So so it's made it harder for me. And this is still happening. It's made it harder for me to lay off the electronics on the Sabbath. And that I can say as a direct result of the pandemic.

**Kit Heintzman 34:29**

What was it, what were some of the differences in your experience of going to synagogue in real life and then going to service online?

**Miriam 34:39**

Well, as I said, my brother died. I don't know if I mentioned he died on the evening of Rosh Hashanah, just as the holiday was starting. For a brother for a sibling. You get a 30 day mourning period where you say the prayer for the deceased for 30 days. In order to do this, you have got to you have to do it in person, you have to do, sorry, you have to do it in a community, you've got to have 10 adult Jews, adult meaning over 13,13 or over. You have to be in a community of 10 fellow worshipers in order to say the prayer for the deceased. The reason is that you're not allowed to isolate yourself. When you're in mourning, you need the community and the community has to show up for you. If nine people come and it's not 10, you can't say it. So it's a way of, of showing the need for the mourner to have a community to get them through the the first time for an a, a parent it's 12 months 11 months of saying the prayer, you don't say it for 12 months, because only the really bad people need it for the full year. And you don't want to imply that you're your parent is one of the worst. This is a real thing. So so just off on a little tangent here. The prayer for the dead is called the Kaddish and the mourners Kaddish, it's considered that the soul is in some type of purgatory or in, in uncertain state for a maximum of one year, the worst it's a year. So we stopped saying the prayer even though the person is not quite settled, yet the soul of the deceased is not quite settled yet. For a parent, you've stopped saying it after 11 months, because you don't want to people to think that you think your parent was bad enough to need 12 months. But for for a brother, it's 30 days. When you when other people in my family have died when my parents died, I could go in person and have a community around me. And the rabbi would ask me to, on the first day, at least to say a few words about my parents. My father was an artist. So I showed people his artwork on my phone. They talked to me you're in the presence of other mourners, who are also in the same boat as you. Sometimes you're ending your mourning period at the same time. So you, you know your bonds together and go out to lunch after you both finished stuff like that. With the pandemic, I was basically on my own I was at home tuning in no hugs. No, you know, like no one on one conversations. It's just the screen and then you know, after we say it well, meeting over goodbye, everybody. And so that was different.

**Kit Heintzman 37:23**

Would you compare what it was like to do Rosh Hashanah, before the pandemic and then thinking about the sort of different stages of the pandemic we're in and make that change?

**Miriam 37:35**

Okay. Before Rosh Hashanah before the pandemic, it's a major gathering and Yom Kippur too. So you've seen the people who only come once a year, come on Rosh Hashanah people who go to maybe I tend to go to morning services, other people go to evening services. So we don't see each other much, even though we're both equally involved. Or there could be people who do all kinds of other activities, but not necessarily go to the same service as I do. And suddenly, it's an opportunity to see all of them. And it's you know, tight, a tight community, the synagogue fills up. It's so it's a it's a major gathering and you feel like you're surrounded by by, you know, friends and loved ones and strangers that have something in common with you spiritually, they're on this, they're somewhere on the same path as you maybe not in the same spot, but on the same path. That's what it felt like, when, when you go to services, it's also a lot easier not to get distracted. Because there's people watching you know, you know, you know, you're not just gonna take out your, you know, you're not just gonna take out a novel or read the newspaper, or check your email or whatever it is you might be tempted to do when you're on your own. And there's, you know, I don't want to call it entertainment, but my rabbi does really know how to keep things animated, and interesting and fun. So that's what Rosh Hashanah is like for me, before the pandemic and of course, there's lots of hugs and people wearing their finest clothing and people dressed in we'd, a lot of people on Yom Kippur dress in a Kittel, which is a white, a white, a white coat with no pockets. It's basically a shroud. Yom Kippur is a practice of rehearsal for being dead you don't eat, you don't drink, you don't have sex, you don't wash. It's like minimizing your personal life. And we even were part of a shroud which I have one of those. So it's a reminder that you're not always going to be here. Someday there's going to be a day of reckoning. And so it's a way of preparing for it. I like that it's a an important, it's an important part of my spiritual housecleaning every year to to get rid of all these things that I've done that I shouldn't have done and say apologize to the people I need to apologize to. I'm talking more about Yom Kippur than Rosh Hashanah. But it's a week, it's basically a week later, the High Holidays in general. So that's what it was like before. After, do you want? Is that the next question? After I was at home, you know with myself, my husband's not a religious guy. So he, you know, it's me at services, and I can see 24/25 faces at a time. And I have to scroll through if I want to see other people. I don't have the, I can see that there's maybe three or four people in the sanctuary that's usually full of hundreds of people at this time. And they're, you know, they're just reading from the Torah or reading the service. And nobody's nobody's there, except a couple of rabbis and, you know, in maybe two or three other people. So it was it's weird. It's not the same kind of community experience as having people that you actually see and look around and wave to wave on Zoom. Nobody knows who you're waving to. [laughing]

**Kit Heintzman** 41:08

Has your relationship to touch changed over the last couple of years?

**Miriam** 41:11

Oh, that's Yes. Yes. I am much more hesitant to, to hug or be hugged. Or, you know, shaking. I don't remember. I almost never shake hands anymore. I done you know, I like the Asian bow or you know, like, you know, yeah, so yeah, with strangers at I've also, still, and I think I'm going to make it permanent. I don't think it's a bad idea. Try to keep six feet distance from people in stores. When I'm standing in line at the supermarket or in Home Depot or something. I'd realized what why were we why why were we so close together to begin with is all kinds of things that we could give each other not just COVID I didn't get I didn't get even a cold. I didn't even get the sniffles during since COVID started. Yeah, so my sense of touch has changed. Talking about going back to a sense of touch with hospice patients. It's, yeah, I had, when I remember, this must have been kind of early in the pandemic, I had a patient who was bedridden. And we had gotten into the habit of me giving her head rubs and you know, head massages. And so now I had to do it with gloves on with with latex gloves on, which is not quite the same.

And with my mask on, and I think she had to wear a mask while I was there for a while, the patients are rarely in house in nursing homes. They typically don't have to wear their masks, during COVID. But everybody who's around them does. So yeah, and it was like, I'm sitting further away from them than I normally would. And, and being a little bit more hesitant to hug them goodbye. When I leave

**Kit Heintzman** 43:04

What are some of the things you observed happening in nursing homes?

**Miriam** 43:08

Okay, the mains, okay, so the main thing that I saw right away, in addition to everybody wearing masks. Now remember, a lot of people in nursing homes have memory problems. And I was concerned that when they can only see this much of your face, they might not be able to recognize you. So a lot of times I'd come in and pull up my mask and smile at them quickly. And then put the mask over hoping that maybe that would give them a sense of a I'm smiling at them, they might not be able to see that from my eyes. And this is you know, this is who I am in case you need the whole face to make a connection. So that was one thing the masks is one thing. The other thing was that immediately a lot of places that always had all kinds of fun stuff going on. Visitors and musicians coming in and game you know, game players I used to go I had organized. I was the organizer for this. A woman from my congregation called me one day, allegedly to talk about end of the end of she was in a nursing home. Allegedly she wanted to talk about her funeral plans or something and help me me help her write down what she wanted for her funeral and we did that a little bit and then she said to me I don't feel like myself anymore. I don't go anywhere I don't do anything. So I said to her well why don't I pick you up and we'll go to a movie she was more she was mobile enough that I could have done that. And then she says all of a sudden her wistful saw you know depressed state change. She says I don't want to go out I want you to come here. I want you to entertain me. How about belly dance? [laughing] So I wasn't I wasn't dancing anymore but I still have friends that do so I made up this you know this group of volunteers that would come once a month and down and belly dance for the for the nursing home. And she was always front row and center. The first time we went, it was known, you know, a normal crowd. The second time I went, it was at three o'clock. And when I got there, the volunteer coordinator says they've been here since two o'clock. And I said, but I thought it was three o'clock. I'm sorry, I, you know, we were down there, they just says no, no, they've been sitting there, since three o'clock waiting to make sure they had a seat for the belly dance. So, so that was good. But um, when she died, now she died during the pandemic, that the lady that I did this for, she died during the pandemic, she had a funeral, oh, funerals, funerals are now online, I there was a lot of people that that in my synagogue that died during the pandemic, who had maybe a couple of family members and a rabbi. And, and that's it at their funeral, everybody else tuned in on Facebook. So that's a sad thing for the family to, to have to have, you know, their, their loved one buried without seeing how many people are around that, that that care. Back to the nursing home. So so one thing that shut down immediately was all the outside entertainment people. And even the valley, even the inside of that one nursing home, the nursing home where I said the woman I think died of loneliness had it where they weren't allowed out of their rooms, they weren't allowed out of their rooms, for weeks or months. And this is a place that you know, doesn't have a you know, these rooms aren't exactly they're painted, dingy colors, and don't have a lot of decorations. And, you know, you're like, you know, I mean, people have a TV, but that was it. And nobody's allowed, I mean, only the staff members are allowed him to feed them and stuff. That was, I think the worst of it. Of course, also the protocols for getting in changed, I have to take my temperature, I have to write down not only my name, I have to fill out a form saying about my my symptoms and COVID risk, and they might have I traveled and stuff like that. And of course, wash my hands, that's no problem, you know, make sure that they will

have masks out where you can if you don't have a mask, you can put one. Yeah, so that's what changed in nursing homes for in my experience, in addition to many nursing homes not allowing people to come.

**Kit Heintzman** 47:32

2020 was such a big year, beyond just the pandemic. And the same can be said for 2021. And the same might be able to be said for 2022. I'm wondering other than the pandemic, what have been some of the other social political issues that have been on your mind?

**Miriam** 47:51

Oh, boy, well, okay. The main thing for me, has been the eroding the erosion of democracy, let's just put it that way, the erosion of democracy, the trend, not only in our country, but around the world towards authoritarianism has been a big thing for me. On the abortion issue, I am in a tiny minority within the Jewish community in that I believe that that all homosapiens including from the very beginning, a homo sapiens is, by definition, a human, and we should all be recognized as human and not be discriminated against based on how big we are or how needy we are, or how connected we are to the rest of the world. I at the same time, I'm not in the camp of most of the active I would call them. I don't like the term pro choice, because it implies that other people don't believe in choice, which is not true, I believe in nonviolent choice. I don't like the term pro life because it's encompasses so many different issues that have so many different ways of, you know, so many different ways of being parsed. I think that I like to call people abortion rights advocates, and fetal rights advocates. So I'm different from other fetal rights advocate that are very vocal in that I think that that contraception is key to, to prepping society for getting to the point where we could even talk civilly about the possibility of protecting life before birth. I think that they've put the cart before the horse by changing laws, instead of changing first situations and then attitudes. So I'm in a weird position right now because, you know, it's the Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade, I can't. I can't oppose that. But I think that it's the wrong time because people aren't on board. So it's been a difficult time for me in that respect. And I just continue to make my donations to, to a local clinic and ask them to use it for contraception and to make donations for male contraception, which I think since men are also reproduce, men compose half of the reproductive population, they should have more than two choices. So that's where so yeah, so abortion. But more than that, the the situation we're in where we are so polarized, and so nasty to each other on both sides, and the concerns about not trusting our society enough to believe that we did not have a stolen election. Those have been on my mind.

**Kit Heintzman** 51:01

I'm curious, what does the word health mean to you?

**Miriam** 51:05

That's a good question. We'll health and heal come from the same root. I think that, as somebody as somebody who lives with a chronic medical condition that could kill me. I've never, you know, as I said, I'm never far from, from the possibility of dying of something that I've been living with successfully for really successfully for 50 years. I think that health is a combination of things, it's, I haven't thought about this. I think it's a combination of mental and physical ability to function as you want in life. Despite the challenges. Let's say that. So I'm healthy. Thanks to insulin, for example, and other things and exercise and other technologies. But another person, I think that a person who has other limitations can be healthy if they've got the tools that they need to function and thrive. So I guess I'm saying that we can't define health only in terms of what's happening to the body, but what is going on socially and technologically, to make that less of a problem. I mean, after all, we say we have five senses. And

we know that a person who can't see or can hear has some handicap, but we don't, we don't consider ourselves disadvantage, for not having some sixth sense that nobody can even think about. Because it doesn't exist in our world. Maybe on Mars, there's people there's this life forms that have some sense to, you know, to sense I don't know, ultraviolet radiation, and they know like, by, by feel. And they think that we're at a disadvantage because we don't have it. We don't, we don't think of ourselves as unhealthy. Because we don't have that. That maybe ultraviolet radiation is a good example, because we do use sunscreen and stuff like that. But you know what I'm saying some some, we can only it's all relative. It's all relative. And I don't think that a person who doesn't have all the advantages of other people necessarily has to think of themselves as as sick.

**Kit Heintzman** 53:23

What are some of the things you want for your own health?

**Miriam** 53:27

I like okay, I pretty much right now have you know, there's been times when I've thought, if I could change something about my body, what would it be? The obvious choices, I'd like to have not have diabetes, but I'm not sure that's what I pick, I think I'd like to have great skin, I might like to have to be able to keep my weight under control without effort. I'm used to having diabetes. So you know, it's just my normal, I've been doing this since I was 15. I rather have nice skin [laughing] which is getting harder and harder as I get older. So, um, so my hope for myself, I feel like if I can, I would like to be able to keep my keep my independence, as long as I can. And my mental independence especially, and my ability to communicate, as somebody who's who loves languages and learning languages, that's part of my identity. If I were, for example, to develop a form of aphasia, where I couldn't put sentences together, that would require me to rethink who I actually am. I think that I have like everybody else I would like to die instantly have a heart attack when I'm 85 or 95. Or, and, and be perfectly fine until then. But more realistically, as I've gotten into the doula world and into the world of trying to help people normalize death. I'm thinking of myself. Have more as somebody who wants to find a gracious way to gradually let my body and my soul part ways someday like when I, a simple thing, when I looked at and when I'm in a public restroom I wash my hands and then put it under the these very high power dryers now. It used to be my skin was perfectly elastic, they wouldn't bounce around now it like it wiggles around under the dryer and I'm looking at it say this sees this, I am old, I am old. But rather than try to fix that and try to disguise it, I'm trying to embrace it and say this is the normal. This is where I am at this point in my body and my soul as a partnership getting closer to the end of the partnership. Does that answer the question?

**Kit Heintzman** 55:54

Yes. What do you think might change if we as a culture have a more normalized relationship with death?

**Miriam** 56:02

Oh, that's a good question that I haven't focused on completely I focused more on just like getting people to normalize it. Other life cycle think of how we deal with other life cycle events when somebody's being born. We don't avoid the topic. Well, you know, you might but you know, the family is allowed to plan they openly plan for the baby. They talk about it. They take classes, they buy stuff, they have baby showers to talk about this they have maybe some kind of last hurrah at the disco or well it you know, disco, I'm probably aging, I'm dating myself here. I don't know if disco still a thing. But um, but in other words, it's embraced as normal. And if you're pregnant, this is going to happen. And we should be prepared for it and make the most of it and make it the most beautiful experience that people can have doulas, birth doulas do a great job at that. Making it so that it's a

memorable experience for everybody involved and that the woman gets everything she needs as the way she defines it, and so forth. When you're going to get married, nobody tells you to put off to that you don't have to think about your wedding. That you don't have to plan for it. They help you plan for it, they embrace it, and they're with you, when you go through all the bridezilla stuff of you know wanting to be the center of attention and talk about it. But when we're facing death, a lot of times, you know, whether it's it's something that's actual factual in our lives, like we've got a diagnosis. The first step is of course, and I don't I'm not opposed to this is to fight it, to get the chemo to do the treatment, to stood leave no stone unturned to see how long we can fight this disease. I have nothing against that. Because I think that a lot of times, you know, we value life, there's, you know, there's a reason, we don't want to, there's all kinds of reasons that we don't want to die any sooner than we have to. So I don't want to try to you know, discourage people from taking the steps they can if they can get a cure, but when there is no hope, and people are still being told to not give up. And to you know, just try one more round of chemo or, or to deny that this is going to happen and say, You can fight this, when maybe they're they've decided it's no longer worth the fight. Or when grandpa who's pretty healthy, but old says after he blows up the birthday candles, I think this is my last birthday. What do people say? Oh, come on, you're gonna outlive us. Righ?. Don't say that. You're Come on. You gotta be you live another 20 years. But maybe he's, it's on his mind. Obviously, it's on his mind if he said that. So instead of saying you're going to outlive us all ha ha and shutting down the conversation and, and taboo in the feeling. How about saying, Do you think so? How do you feel about that? What would you like to? Is there anything? What would you like to do before you reach that point? And grandpa might just say, I was only kidding, you know, I don't want to talk about it. That's his prerogative. But he might have been, it might be a time for somebody to a grandchild to interview him about his life and what he's proud of, and what it's still like to do and so forth and so on, and maybe make sure that he has some kind of plan for how he wants to end of his life to be. I think those things. Yeah, I think those are some things that would happen if we normalize the conversation. There would be there would be a lot fewer people dying without wills a lot fewer people dying without anybody knowing what they wanted for their funeral to be like they would be a lot more education of what kind of things are environmentally friendly in funerals. People don't know that a cremation is people think we mentioned this mean, actually, you know, basically you're, you're burning the organic part of your body and putting it into the air. And people think people don't know this because they don't educate themselves about these things, the way they educate themselves about other things, because they don't want to think about it.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:00:17

What does safety mean to you?

**Miriam** 1:00:19

Oh, that's such a that's such a great question. Um I'm not sure I have an answer. Obviously, freedom from you know, the definite dictionary definition, freedom from danger. But that's, I think that I assume you mean emotional safety? I, Okay. Well, emotional safety, I think is to be heard the way you're hearing me right now, I don't know what's going through your mind. I don't know if you're thinking what a nut, you know? It's possible. But I'm, you know, rolling with it. And coming up with things that I haven't that I didn't know, I was thinking, because I have the opportunity to articulate the thoughts that I that come to mind. And that brings up another thought, it's the tools call this deep active listening, which is what you're doing for me now, where you're, you're listening without judgment, and you've got a supportive look on your face. And you will come up with a follow up question that may be sprung out of one of my sprang out of one of my answers. Or maybe it's something that you're already got on your list. This is helping me feel safe, because I feel like I can say whatever is comes to

mind, without somebody saying, really? You know? Come on, or this is what I think. Even this is what I think, which is perfectly legitimate, but just, you know, also makes the speaker feel like there's maybe there's something wrong with what I think. So I think that safety, what the fact that I feel safe in this conversation comes from being heard, without judgment.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:02:04

There's been this really narrow idea of safety within the confines of sort of talking about COVID and thinking, like really tiny aspect of safety, what are some of those things you've been doing to make yourself feel safer?

**Miriam** 1:02:20

Okay, in terms of COVID? Absolutely. Okay, so I have been, I still wash my hands a lot more than I used to, I found a joke online that said, I washed my hands so much today that I found the answers to my eighth grade social studies test on my hand. [laughing]

**Miriam** 1:02:43

But, you know, I've got I still use my sanitizer from time to time, I always have a mask with me, which I will use depending on how crowded it is. If I you know, if I go to a if I go to a to a synagogue, and there's a small, a small crowd, I won't put it on. But once it gets a little bit fuller, a lot of times I'll put it on, I'm had to my second booster. So I've kept up with my my vaccinations. I keep social distance with everybody except, you know, my closest friends and my husband, I still go to a bar once a month for my belly dance show. And do keep my mask on I figure you know, at some point, if I do get it, I'm hoping that it will be a mild case now, as the variants get more mild and more more, more contagious, but more mild, and I've got my vaccinations. And I wash my hands for 20 seconds. Not not every time anymore. But you know, after I've been in a nursing home or something. So that's basically the things that I'm still doing, although less diligently than before, and I'm not wearing masks nearly as much as I used to.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:03:59

What was access to vaccination like where you are?

**Miriam** 1:04:02

It was, okay. When I the first vaccination that I got was difficult. I was on hold for many for you know, I had to call multiple times. And I can't remember how I finally I think a friend told me of a way to do it online, where you sign up and then you wait. And you when the clock runs out, there's a clock going and when the clock runs out, that's when you jump in and sign up and you got to look at that clock and stay there because you don't want to miss the first 30 seconds. So that was tough, but getting to it was, I have a car. So it was quite a ways away but it was it was accessible for me. I don't know how easy it would have been if I had to rely on buses. But may I think there might be a public transportation to vaccination sites, I'm not sure. And then I stood in line and it was pretty quick and easy. And you know took me maybe about about an hour or two to get the first vaccination second vaccination was already scheduled for me at the first vaccination. So that was easy to go to. And the boosters were simply went into a pharmacy. Or I guess I made an appointment online with a pharmacy and showed up and it was done without any fanfare it was it was great.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:05:23

How are you feeling about the immediate future?



**Miriam** 1:05:28

Um, you mean in general, for myself or for the world? Okay, so this is an open up for myself, I feel great about the immediate future I'm we're planning to upgrade our backyard and build a deck and put in some gravel and stuff. So I'm focusing a lot on that. I've, I'm healthy, thank God, according to my definition of healthy. And, you know, I feel very good about the immediate future for myself. As I said, I think I said, I always am conscious of the possibility of it all ending with no, with no warning, I look at my dogs, which the little idiot barker, there is the love of my life. And everyday pretty much just because of who I am. I think that someday, you know, he's going to not be here anymore, he's going to die. And I'll probably have to be a part of that. But it makes me a little sad for a little while. But mostly it's I just consider it just a fact of life, and to enjoy it. As far as the world is concerned, I'm very concerned to Oh, I forgot to mention, a major thing that I'm concerned about in the world view is Ukraine. I think this it's a disaster that Ukraine has been attacked, there is no justification for it. And I am both I've financially supported and I'm, you know, doing my best to emotionally support Ukraine and hope them for that they have a success and a victory. I think it's a very bad precedent for not just Europe, but every country in the world when a when the largest country in the world can invade a smaller country, just because it you know, it thinks it has the right. That's been on my mind daily. So that's something that really concerns me, concerned with the political course of the way the world is going in terms of incivility, and nationalism, and authoritarianism. And having had a president who would rather believe that we that our entire system is corrupt, then believe that he could, that he personally could lose an election and people, people believing this, it bothers me a lot. So I have a lot of concerns. I'm very concerned about environment, the environment, and you know, what we can do about it. Those are my main concerns, and of course, gun control, or the shootings.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:08:09

I have a lighter question. How's your relationship with your dog changed? Or has it changed?

**Miriam** 1:08:16

With my dog?

**Kit Heintzman** 1:08:18

Yeah.

**Miriam** 1:08:19

By by becoming what, but but by what?

**Kit Heintzman** 1:08:23

By being at home more often, how's your relationship with your dogs changed?

**Miriam** 1:08:28

I am not much. I, okay. When I was working, I was a translator, not an interpreter, I was a translator, which means I did things in writing, things would come to me, I almost never met any of my clients in the last 20 years. They'd send me stuff online, and I do it on in my house. So I've been home a lot for many years. Since before the dogs were, you know, were born. So my relationship with the dogs has not changed. At all. I'd say it's pretty much the same. You know, I walked them and, you know, yeah, it hasn't much changed.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:09:08

What are some of your hopes for a longer term future?

**Miriam** 1:09:12

For myself or for the world? Okay, its up to me. You're leaving it all, to me. My hope for the long term future is that eventually I think that one thing that has really changed in the world that's at the root of a lot of our problems, is that media has gone from being something that's curated by professionals who can decide what you know what's news, and hopefully investigate it and maybe get some things wrong and have a bias but not published things that are absolutely false. And if they do to make a correction the next day, and now we have a world where everyone of us is a journalist. Every one of us can post anything we want on Facebook and spread things that seem true to us without knowing if it really is true for it, here's an example. This was a professor of mine. From years ago, we connected on Facebook. And she posted on Facebook, that we that Tommy Hilfiger, I think it was Tommy Hilfiger, boycott Tommy Hilfiger, because he said, he only wants white people wearing his clothes. He said this on and you know, so I thought that's a bizarre thing to say. So, I looked it up. I looked up the articles. There was a rumor going around that he was on Oprah, and said to Oprah, that he didn't know he only wanted white people wearing his clothes, and she threw him off the stage. Turns out he was never on. So, I've you know, then Oprah invites him on the stage. And they agreed together that he had never ever been on her show that this was complete nonsense. He denied it. And it was it was a complete falsehood, a complete falsehood. But there's this thing going around on Facebook saying boycott Tommy Hilfiger, because he's a racist. I text I emailed you know, I responded, I said, this is not true. Here's the article that says it's not true. And my tea and my professor, previous professor said, she's a professor of Italian. Whether it's true or not, I'm going to post it, because people like him have these attitudes, and so forth. And I wrote back and I said, You are bearing false witness against the if people like him, who do you mean white, white males? Who do you mean by people like him? If he didn't say it, if he said something wrong post that don't make something up and attributed to him, and she unfriended me. So this kind of thing worries me. And I've got numerous other examples of people who posted things, claiming that so and so says this, And when you look it up, they didn't say it, and not regretting it say, well, she probably thinks it, or will it, I'm sure this is part of their agenda, this this form of journalism, where everybody can get on and spread it not just to their friends with chain letter, but to the whole world spread, spread lies about public figures and situations and not everybody can have take the time to look up all the lights. This concerns me a lot. And my hope for the future is that we'll find a way to have a meet a form of media where you can tell if something's real or not, or false, or, or something like that, that people people recognize, I think that this is at the root of a lot of our, of our new problems. That everybody can say, I don't want to censor people or say you don't have the right to speak. But it used to be if you wanted to say something in a newspaper, you had to write a letter to the editor, and they would decide whether to print it or not. And not everybody got printed for just for space reasons. But now everybody can post anything, anywhere. And I think that is creating all kinds of bubbles and all kinds of polarization and based on lies, and if we're going to be polarized, it should at least be on something that's true.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:13:35

What are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself over the last couple of years?

**Miriam** 1:13:41

Well, I try to do a decent diet. I try to exercise regularly. My Sabbath is a good antidote to depression and stress. It's a 25 hour period of stop the world I want to get off pretty much just you know, basically, focus on resting and not doing but rather being and enjoying rather than acquiring and fixing. That I think has been a really good

source of mental health for me mental and physical health for me. And I have good medical insurance. I go to doctors regularly I go to a lot of doctors regularly. So basically, you know, just try to maintain a decent lifestyle. And I believe in humor. I'm constantly posting jokes on my Facebook page and making sure I laugh every day. So that's.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:14:41

Did the pandemic impact your ability to access doctors for sort of more routine care?

**Miriam** 1:14:47

Yes, I had one or two appointments where it was by telephone rather than or telephone resume rather than in person. I didn't mind this as long as I mean, it's not it. Were there specialists that I see routinely, just to be sure. And I didn't feel like I really needed, it wasn't an urgent care thing. But other than that, it hasn't affected me too much. Yeah, I don't I just getting through the door is you've got to, you know, put on a mask and sign papers and stuff that say you have this or that or things like that. But as far as accessing doctors, it hasn't been bad for me. I live in a major city with a lot of doctors. So that helps. Yeah.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:15:38

What do you think scholars in the social sciences and humanities should be doing right now to help us understand the human side of the pandemic?

**Miriam** 1:15:47

Oh, that's out of my area of comfort. I assume that it's their specialty. And hopefully, they'll, they'll know what to do. I don't I don't know.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:16:03

I'd like to invite you to think of speaking to a historian in the future someone far enough in the future that they have no lived experience of this moment.

**Miriam** 1:16:14

Okay.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:16:15

What would you tell them matters to you about this moment, and you want to be sure they don't forget?

**Miriam** 1:16:22

Okay. Okay, so we're talking to how 40/50 years into the future. Okay. And we're talking about the COVID situation? Pretty much? Okay. I would like them would talk about to the historian themselves, or to people in general? The historian?

**Kit Heintzman** 1:16:44

As a historian themselves, so the person who might end up writing a story about this moment.

**Miriam** 1:16:50

Okay, I'd like them to, to realize that a lot of the opposite, it seems to me that a lot of the opposition to this particular vaccination was there was a lot of grooming for it. Over a period of years of people discrediting the media. And the fact that certain pharmaceutical countries, companies really did not have our best interests at heart, and that was in the air. There's a lot of reasons why people don't trust either the media, which I already talked about, because now we're all the media.

**Miriam** 1:17:35

I guess I'd want to talk about the importance of trusting the sources. And the and what can go wrong when people refuse to trust the sources, even in the face of absolute evidence that they're telling us the truth. I, you know, I have a friend who believes she didn't get vaccinated. And she goes online, she spends hours a day, in a bubble online, she heard about one. We were at a party, this was one of the first parties I went to. I was one of the few I was the only person wearing masks. And people were coming up to me to hug me is not obvious. And maybe do I really have to wear a sign that says, don't hug me I am still trying to social distance. But this friend of mine that believes that all of us who are vaccinated are going to be dead in two years, she believes that her other friend wrote, wrote it down on her calendar, two years from now that will all be dead and you know, see who died. She goes online and found some person in Australia, who some young person who got a vaccine and then immediately died afterwards playing while playing basketball. In the room, there were three of us who had lost immediate relatives to COVID in that room. And yet, she doesn't see the danger of COVID she sees the dangers of vaccination. What was my point about this? I think that she's you know, she's selectively choosing what she's going to listen to, and ignoring the hard evidence from everything else. And I think that maybe what I would want people to know in the future, historians know in the future, is how to investigate how it is that people can choose what to believe and what not to believe, and can choose to ignore evidence that that is right in their face. In this case, the safety of the vaccinations. If they were as unsafe as there's some people saying there, there would be a lot more people you would know a lot more people that died right after getting them. Then you know, people that died of COVID That's the best I can articulate.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:19:59

That's perfect. I want to thank you so much.

**Miriam** 1:20:03

Thank you

**Kit Heintzman** 1:20:03

For the beauty of your answers and generosity of your time. Those are all of the questions I know how to ask at this moment. But if there's anything you'd like to say that I haven't made room for, please take some space to say so.

**Miriam** 1:20:21

I can't think of anything right off the bat. So, thank you. Thanks for the attention. You helped me form No, I mean, I'm still in the early stages of trying to hone my craft as a doula and this can you know, this is one thing that has to do with it so, so it can help me move forward and what I hope to be doing at some point, thank you.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:20:44

You're ever most welcome. Bye