

## ***Facing War in the Time of Corona***

For two years I have sought to remind us that the virus has shrunk the world considerably. That what happens to us here, impacts folks “over there”. That we must live in a world of inter-connectivity or we will never be able to defeat this virus. Instead, Russia has embraced the motto, of “what’s mine is mine, and what’s yours is mine.” Since World War 2 there has not been such an onslaught against another country. Thousands have fled and the death toll continues to mount.

We sit in our homes powerless to stop this virus. Against hate, aggrandizement, and avarice, there is no vaccination.

For those whose family descends from Ukraine, there is a personal connection. Distant, perhaps, yet personal. A feeling of Deja vu in the realization that had a relative not immigrated here, then we could be Ukrainian. The faces on television tug at our hearts. The unfathomable decisions families are making to save their families a ghostly reminder of our own history. A stranger implores another stranger, *“Please, take my children. Keep them safe. I will find them when this is all over. Please”*

Most of the time, when I write, I have a direction, a point to make. But this essay seems rudderless. Feelings making their way all over the map. Afraid for the people of Ukraine. Afraid that this war will spill over to Europe and eventually our country in ways unintended and unpredictable.

As a rabbi I could suggest we all pray. And though I believe in the power of prayer to unite us and to calm us. I admit that sometimes prayer is not enough. God has made a bargain with us a long time ago. We are responsible for our actions. We are responsible for waging war or peace. We are responsible for keeping our egos and our avarices in check. We are responsible for standing up to evil.

What that looks like will change day by day as perceived threats and aggressions become more pronounced.

And still, we must learn, what happens there, impacts us here. Stronger together, we are weaker when we turn a blind eye.

Rabbi Sanford Akselrad