



This Too Shall Pass in the Time of Corona

There is an old Jewish story about a King who wanted to determine which of his children should take over when he left the throne. He challenged each child to bring him back an unusual gift. This item would make people happy when they are sad; and sad when they were happy. In short, it was a puzzle disguised as a gift. None of his children could figure it out except one. This child brought a small box to the king. The king opened the box, and in it there was a ring. The King studied it and wasn't sure that his child had figured out the puzzle. Until he read the inscription inside the ring, "This too shall pass."

And so it is with our lives. Good things come, we celebrate them, but they pass. And the same with sad things; they do not last forever.

With this caveat.

Human nature has it that joyful things are moments in time. Sad things somehow stay with us much, much longer. We don't appreciate the good times as much as we should when we are in the midst of them. But sadness has a way of lingering and if we are not careful shaping our life outlook.

As we approach two years (!) of living with COVID it is difficult to focus on the good because the cloud of COVID has colored our outlook. Weddings and bar mitzvahs and births have transpired. But the accompanying celebrations have been canceled or much more muted. With the Omicron variation and so many people being infected, it is easy to have PTSD and feel "here we go again..." But the fact is we are not in the same place as we were two years ago. We have come a long way in combating this pandemic and have created many tools to deal with what was a much more virulent strain of this disease.

I read something a few weeks ago that talked about what a life span would have looked like had I been born in 1900. Over the course of 65 years, I would have experienced two world wars, the great depression, Korea, and Vietnam. In my early years just after WW II would have lived in a world where the Great Influenza epidemic of 1918 wiped out anywhere from 17-50 million people worldwide making it one of the deadliest pandemics in human history.

Each of these horrific impactful events eventually passed. This is not to minimize any of them. But to remind ourselves that as a nation and as individuals who have lived through history, we are more resilient than we remember.

We can not allow this period of time to divide us or demoralize us. Stronger together, we must stay strong for each other. Reach out to people you care about and check in on them. Find moments to celebrate and cherish. Continue to use this time to be creative and learn new things. Protect your health, but also protect your lives. Don't give up on living; for this too shall pass. And when it does, let us hope that we can look back upon this time knowing that we did all we could to help each other.

Rabbi Sanford Akselrad