



Finding Strength in the Time of Corona

Vegas Strong.

We all remember when this term became popularized after the horrific 1 October shootings of 2017. Since that time, the phrase “Vegas Strong” has become an iconic reminder of the resilience of our community when it is going through hard times such as today.

Uncertain times require a pulling together of our country, our state, our city and our families. In short, we must all be strong.

I don’t know about you, but as difficult as the past few weeks have been, the idea of being asked to stay at home for at least another month (and who knows how much longer?) hit me a bit hard. I knew it was coming. Social distancing is one of the most effective ways to stop this virus. But still, there was a tiny bit of hope that we would be able to return to normalcy sooner.

But that is not the case.

Our new normal, has been renewed.

And so we must ask ourselves, where do we find the strength to continue remaining strong? It is easy to give in to uncertainty. To loneliness. To fear. Indeed we have been fighting against those emotions since day one. Or at least day two. As a new reality began to gradually sink in.

The psalmist of old asked the same question: “*Mai ayin yavo Ezri?*” From where will my help come?” And he answers his own question: “*ezri yavo miAdonai, oseh shamayim va’aretz*”...***my help shall come from the Eternal, maker of heaven and earth.***”

I am not suggesting a Pollyannaish view that we just shrug our shoulders and say, “It’s in God’s hands”. I am suggesting though, that we are not alone. If ever there was a time for prayer and for faith, this is it. Since time immemorial our people has indeed gained strength by our deep sense of faith, and the belief that though we are going through a time of uncertainty, those days will eventually disappear, and better days will be restored. In the midst of uncertainty it is hard to see tomorrow. And that is why we must see the world through the lens of faith and the strength that it brings.

Lonely we may be, but alone we are not.

And if we look for God, I would say, look at God’s partners. Our first responders are incredible. Businesses that can afford it have paid employees during this crises. And who would have thought that an ordinary delivery person would risk their health to insure that food and groceries were delivered? Ordinary citizens have come forward to volunteer. Calls came into our Temple to help and we have 50 people making phone calls of reassurance on a weekly basis. Another dozen have offered to do shopping for home bound seniors. My students in the 9-10th grade wrote letters to seniors sharing their experiences and feelings as I reminded them that many of these seniors went through tougher times in World War 2. People rise to expectations and are inspired by examples of hope and love. And thankfully those abound.

We are created “*b’tzelem Elohim*” in the “image of God.” And just as God is a source of compassion and love, so too must we all.

Vegas strong. We are strong. I am strong.

Partners with God, we shall all persevere.

Rabbi Sanford Akselrad