Rev's Reflections

If you were one of the folks lucky enough to get to attend Sandra Laub's performance of "Picking up Stones" at UUCSC on Saturday, you probably left with a sense of awe, swimming in the complexity of the subject.

Ms. Laub wrote the script, and read all 14 parts, including the part of herself. It was difficult to follow at times, but she moved effortlessly between characters in Israel, Palestine and around the world, reflecting on the conflict going all the way back to the Holocaust and even Sarah and Hagar.

I left feeling like there was so much to unpack, but a couple things stood out above all else.

A few days after the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, Ms. Laub mentioned to her Rabbi that she was thinking about the innocent non-combatants dying in Gaza. He stopped her and said it wasn't her responsibility to worry about them so soon. Her job for the moment, and for as long as she needed, was to tend to her own grief, fear and worry about her family and friends in Israel.

While I don't remember him saying it to her directly I thought, "Exactly. It's the job of others right now to do that kind of worrying. People who aren't under attack are the ones who should be worrying right now about Gaza. People who aren't personally targeted by the worst attack against Jews since the Holocaust."

I've said so many times that the job of a religious community is to hold the hope for one another in difficult times, so that in the midst of loss and chaos we can tend to ourselves and the people we love. This is the kind of hope I'm talking about: hope that no more innocents will die.

Many of my ministerial colleagues are calling Israel's response a genocide. Some — most of whom have no stake in the crisis — are saying that by not using the word genocide I am personally accountable for the deaths in Gaza, an accomplice to murder. Each time I hear that kind of charge, it

reeks to me of antisemitism. And as we saw in Saturday's performance, the antisemites are out in full force, using the language of genocide.

Ms. Laub has been publicly attacked for trying to play both sides of the issue. I don't see that. I see someone who can sit with the nuances of an ancient and perhaps unresolvable conflict, even in her identity as a Jew. I'm glad she has invited us, as a community of diverse faith, to be with her.

In Peace,
Rev Denis