



Shabbat Vayera/14 Cheshvan 5778
November 3, 2017

Dear Shir Tikvah:

In their book, "The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods," John McKnight and Peter Block write, "Hospitality is the signature of not only an abundant community, but a confident one.... Welcoming strangers is a source of vitality and learning... Without the presence of strangers, our culture stagnates and ultimately disappears (pg 79)."

It is as if McKnight and Block were channeling Abraham and Sarah, who in this week's parsha welcome three strangers into their tent.

Nu? C'mon rabbi. They fed hungry people in the desert. What's the big deal?

In some ways, Sarah and Abraham's moment in history is so much like our own: People were living with deep, painful uncertainty about the future; there was political strife and palpable tension in the air; we were frightened of our neighbors-let alone strangers-who could be marauding bandits, thieves, or murderers. Fear was a pervasive odor in the atmosphere.

Abraham and Sarah beheld a different vision of humanity and their human community. Torah teaches us that they rushed to greet the strangers, welcomed them into their tent, washed their feet, fed them with abundant amounts of food and drink. They celebrated their arrival, listened to their stories, saw their full humanity.

Hachnasat Orchim. Radical hospitality. Welcoming people into our homes, our sanctuaries, our spiritual community without expectation or pretense, with an abundance of joy and hope.

Sarah and Abraham bequeathed to us a gorgeous inheritance: a vision of human beings overflowing with love, an enthusiasm for the gifts we could share and create together, a resistance to allowing fear to overwhelm our judgment and our compassion, a hope that strengthens our commitment to each other and to ourselves.

We awaken our greatest spiritual potential as individuals and as a community when we welcome the presence of new people, strangers in one moment who quickly become messengers of Divine promise.

Shabbat Shalom,

Michael

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