



Shabbat Emor 5777  
16 Iyar 5777/May 12, 2017

Dear Shir Tikvah:

We are reminded in Jewish tradition-relentlessly, it seems-to love our neighbors as ourselves.

V'ahavta l'reiyacha kamocha.

Jewish sages have spent centuries teasing out the meaning and implications of this theological command.

What does love mean?

How is love expressed?

Who are our neighbors? People who live in physical proximity? People who live in the same city? In our same state?

What does it mean to be a neighbor?

What is self love?

Where is the border between healthy self -love and narcissism?

As a synagogue, we're striving to make these words real and relevant today:

We've declared ourselves a Sanctuary Synagogue and we proclaimed that if the government comes to deport our undocumented neighbors, we will give them sanctuary in our sacred building.

We've planted beautiful rain gardens around Shir Tikvah to be good environmental neighbors and to beautify our neighborhood.

On June 7th, we're hosting Iftar-the break fast dinner during the Holy Month of Ramadan-for our Muslim neighbors and community members.

In July, Shir Tikvah members will once again join the Red Ribbon Ride on Team Shalom, raising awareness and financial resources for our neighbors living with HIV/AIDS.

We've spent the past two years exploring the spiritual trauma of racism and reaffirming our commitment to building a synagogue community devoted to racial justice, where our members and our neighbors of color are integrated, valued, and seen and our commitment to racial justice is woven into every aspect of our communal life.

And we have so much more work to do to truly love our neighbors:

Last November's election exposed deep tears in the fabric of our society; too many of our neighbors felt a vote for a tyrannical megalomaniac was the only way to get their voices and their concerns heard and taken seriously.

Loving our neighbors means that we're going to need to spend time listening to people we disagree with politically and whose views challenge our core values. Loving our neighbors doesn't mean we subject ourselves to abuse; but it does mean we cultivate the moral and spiritual strength to engage in conversations with people-with neighbors-who experience the world in very different ways from our own.

As we continue to live into this conversation, to animate the ancient text of our people and discern its message and meaning for ourselves, I invite us to try to listen with heart open spaciousness, compassion, and abundant forgiveness for the inevitable mistakes we'll make along the way.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Michael