



Shabbat Sh'lach L'cha 5777/22 Sivan 5777

June 16, 2017

Dear Shir Tikvah:

I'm thinking a lot these days about what it means to be human.

On Wednesday morning just outside Washington, D.C., David Bailey, an African American man, and Crystal Griner, a Lesbian, rushed to save the life of Congressman Steve Scalise, who had been shot while practicing for the annual congressional baseball game. Why mention Mr. Bailey's race and Ms. Griner's sexual orientation? Because the man whose life they saved is a vocal opponent of the Voting Rights Act, marriage equality, and all legal protections for people of color and LGBTQ people . In the process of saving Scalise, Bailey and Griner were shot and wounded themselves.

I am awestruck at the sense of moral duty inside these two beautiful souls-that they were able to see past fierce political disagreements with an elected official-who voted against their very dignity, who referred to himself as white supremacist "David Duke without the baggage"-to help him in his agonizing moment of need.

What exquisite humanity!

Jewish tradition teaches, "B'makom sh'ein anashim, hishtadel l'hiyot ish,"-in a place where no one acts like a human being, we must strive to be humane.

Mr. Bailey and Ms. Griner are the kind of people I'd like to be-in a moment of pain and suffering, to simply be human with each other. I'm striving for their moral character and their moral courage. But if I'm honest with myself, it remains elusive. So I work at it, every day, to focus on the humanity of the person before me-to see and experience in their eyes the wonder and brilliance of their creation.

For me, this is one of the great blessings of Shabbat: the sacred obligation to pause, to witness the human beings around me-in all our beauty and all our brokenness-and to rise to give thanks for the chance to be alive.

In a world that too often feels like its choking on violence and pain, let's all strive to be a little more human with each other.

Shabbat Shalom,

Michael