



25 November 2016/24 Cheshvan 5777

Dear Shir Tikvah,

Our kids get it.

The Sunday after the election, I got to substitute for teacher Jim Cohn. Our 9th graders selected which middot (virtues or qualities) the world needs most from us now.

Two selected self-care: they understand that if we don't take care of ourselves first (like with the oxygen masks in the airplane), then we can't effectively advocate for what matters.

Two selected deep listening. In our parsha this week, Chayei-Sarah, 14 verses (a lot, by biblical standards) describe Abraham's negotiation to purchase a burial plot for Sarah. Each party repeats, "hear me" - really listen to what matters to me - then we can come to an agreement.

We talked about the power of words to create or destroy a life. We looked at some texts about when to speak out (yeah, Rabbi, we've grown up at Shir Tikvah, we know about speaking out). We talked about when to stay silent. All 14 of the perked up about the important impact of words of encouragement.

This past Sunday, I visited as many classes as I could get to. I saw engaged students, committed caring teachers. Some were learning about Standing Rock (7th grade from perspectives of land stewardship as well as human rights, 5th grade from the lens of actual people at Standing Rock). Others were more focused this week on the curriculum Jewish life (e.g. 4th grade on the rituals of bringing a child into the covenant).

It was a delicious reminder that there is good, there is hope, there is a future.

I also talked with parents, some working round the clock to keep food on the table and their children fed, some finding extra time to fight for criminal justice reform, connect Jewish and Muslim women, advocate for kindness in the schools, and more.

Let's listen to what our 9th graders know: We all need words of encouragement. Not just our young people. Not just people facing discrimination. All of us, especially those to whom we are closest. We are all working really hard right now.

May you have a restful, nourishing, joyful Shabbat.

Shabbat Shalom,

Debra