

Summer in Eugene is a time of abundance. There are so many wonderful activities, festivals and outdoor opportunities. There is so much daylight; so much delicious local produce! When I moved here last summer, I was struck by how much garden produce people share with each other; the ways in which we in this community literally nourish each other.

It can be easy in summer to share the abundance, without even having to think of it. Sharing our abundance, however, can be more than just an easy way to get rid of extra zucchini. As a small group discussed in our June “Read with the Rabbi” on Sacred Economics, by Charles Eisenstein, sharing is a way to connect. We learned about a web platform, kindista.org, dedicated to creating an economy of gifting and sharing.

Deep community happens when people feel safe asking for what they need and want, and when people have the space to offer the gifts that they most want to give: of their time, of their skills and of their resources. Community happens when gifts match needs; when gratitude and connections build up. In the wake of terrible mass violence, and in the face of increasingly incendiary hate rhetoric in this country, I want to invite us all to articulate our needs and to tap into our deepest vulnerability - and our deepest generosity. The months of Tammuz and Av are a season of vulnerability; of facing the reality of pain and destruction. During the Three Weeks leading up to Tisha B’Av, we traditionally engage in mourning practices; we cry out in Lamentations. We literally cry for help.

There is a great pressure in our culture to be self-sufficient. “Needy” is an adjective with negative connotations, but what if we embrace neediness, embrace that crying for help? Beautiful growth can occur when we are boldly honest about our needs. Our tradition teaches that the Messiah, the longed-for source of redemption of our people, is to be born on Tisha B’Av. Out of our crying out in need, we actualize redemption.

So as we face these months of both vulnerability and abundance, I invite us all to be honest with each other about what we need, and what we have to give. And if you would like to find a practical vehicle for your need and/or your generosity, I encourage you to join Temple Beth Israel’s group on Kindista.org. This tool can help match our gifts with our needs - and build gratitude and community. May our vulnerability make us stronger.