

Zeitgeist.

It's a word which describes a frame of mind or cultural motif that seems to be everywhere at a particular moment, without officially being spread around.

There seems to be one in Cheyenne these days. Believe it or not, it isn't Frontier Days. It is "community mindedness." The other month, the Board voted to take on the responsibility of cleaning up a section of the Greenway on a provided schedule. We continue to be involved in Family Promise, providing meals to families during times of transitioning out of temporary homelessness. In Sunday's paper it was noted at some length that F.E. Warren is engaged in being a more proactive partner with Cheyenne, including cleaning up a section of the Greenway. Another article on the page indicated that a fire had destroyed much of the stock at St. Vincent de Paul's second hand store. As it happens, Andrea and I were going to be donating several items this week to various organizations, and after reading the article, the bulk of our donations will go there. I invite you, if you have accumulated anything since the rummage sale a few years ago, to bring appropriate items there. This kind of thing is actually the highest level of Tzedakah - the ultimate recipient does not know us, and we do not know them.

In the beginning of this week's Torah Portion, Abraham is recovering from surgery at 99 years old. The Midrash relates that God caused it to be so hot on this particular day that all travelers would just stay put. Abraham was a bit put out, because part of the framework of most days was inviting people who were journeying to stop by for a snack. Or a meal. So God then provided three travelers for Abraham to help out.

When people are ill, or recovering, this process that God initiated of misunderstanding what is desired comes into full force. In some households a sick person is provided a few necessities and then basically left to recover, with some minor checking every so often. In other households a sick person is checked on every few moments, and things are provided practically before they are required. When people from differing household experiences wind up being responsible for one another during moments of illness, the person who did not grow up in your kind of household can be thought of as cold and unloving, or smothering and a pain in the neck. It is true that a person will not often need to know what another person expects when they are sick. Yet this kind of thinking can be generalized to all aspects of life. Is giving up my seat for the elderly a matter of proper manners or an insult? Only the elderly person knows for sure. [I would always get up, and leave the seat open and available for them. I was usually too far away to hear them if they ever complained about an implied insult.]

When we do our good deeds, we should try to make as sure as we can that we are not deciding what somebody else's good is for them, but that what we do is good for them from their perspective. Perhaps this can spread around the world, and help increase peace upon the planet.