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What Will Survive of Us Is Love

There's a beautiful, surprising moment in Philip Larkin's poem, "The Arundel Tomb," that deals with love, permanence, and what's important. It's striking because of who wrote it - Larkin was a pessimist, at best. Frankly, whenever I read his poems I generally regretted it; his bleak cynicism weaves through pretty much everything he wrote.

But "The Arundel Tomb" has a special unique flavor, perhaps because it's so careful, so ambiguous, and so precise. Larkin visits a medieval tomb, in an old cathedral, and sees the ancient tomb of an earl and his countess, their hands held together. It's a striking moment, made all the more so because there are layers and layers of double meanings in how Larkin writes.

And yet, he says, at the end, there is "an almost-instinct, almost true" that "what will survive of us is love."

There I was this morning, standing in our Federation's thin but sturdy sukkah, thinking of this poem. We gathered together as a federation community to pause and reflect, and to have a nosh. And it made me think. What will survive of us isn't our buildings, our magnificent structures, and institutions* or our monuments. What will survive of us is love - our community, our relationships, the people we serve and connect.

That's why our sukkah is so important.

The flimsy, temporary structure will outlast us all, and all that we build, because of what it means. Community, connections, service. What will survive of us is love.

** important though they are*

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Mar 12, 2015

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By Dov Ben-Shimon,
Federation CEO

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