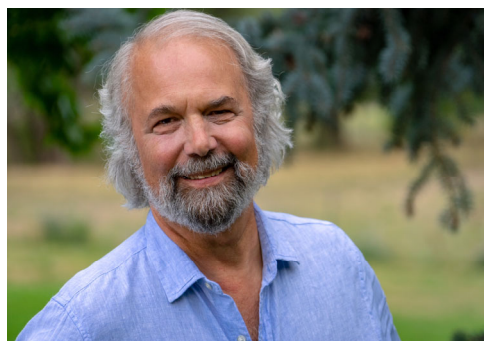


DIVINE VISITATION

PULSE OF SPIRIT
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DAVID KARCHERE is a speaker and workshop leader who assists people to renew their Primal Spirituality—an experience that virtually all human beings know at birth, and that ideally grows as they mature.

Fifty-eight percent of the people of the world associate themselves with three faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. There is one origin story at the root of all of them—the story of Abraham.

Origin stories carry a special power. Whether it is the story of the founding of the United States, the discovery of gravity when Isaac Newton witnessed an apple falling from a tree on his family farm in Lincolnshire, or the story of Superman coming to Planet Earth from Krypton, each tale is seminal for all that comes afterward.

The origin of these three great faiths tells of many things. Perhaps most significantly, it is a story of divine visitation. On this day, when war and the rumors of war in the Middle East fill the world's media, it is an excellent time to remember how people caught up in a tragic conflict have this common ancestor who had an experience that is relevant to us all.

Like many of the gifts made available to humankind to reconnect us with our Source, in the minds of many, the experience of divine visitation is believed

to be in the domain of religion. Its power is conceded to people from the distant past or to special ones of the religious institution. *Who me? Be visited by the Divine?*

Who knows how many times this story has been told? Before there was a Torah, before there were the Ten Commandments, the Quran, or the gospels, there was the story of a man who was visited by a Presence, named with various names in the story, who spoke to him. His story inspired his family and his descendants. It kept them going on a path that became a central thread in the lineage of world civilization.

What does it say to us today, this story of a man who experienced what he did before the existence of any religion that is practiced now? What is his relevance to a world at war?

Divine Presence urged Abraham to leave what is present-day Iraq and then Syria to settle in present-day Israel. Divine Presence promised him that he had a great destiny to serve humanity. It blessed him

and blessed his wife, Sarah. It said his lineage would bless all families of the world.

Sometimes, when reading the story of Abraham, I am moved by the references to the tent in which he was living. It becomes clear that he and his extended family were semi-nomadic people living tribally. And it is as if we have peeked under the flap of their tent, getting a highly personal view of these people from 4,000 years ago.

Here is an episode in the story of Abraham that portrays his welcoming of Divine Presence.

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground.

Doesn't this get you curious already? As it starts out, the Lord appears, and then there are three men. What happened? How did the Lord become three men? It's a divine visitation, and what was translated in English as the word *Lord* was about that visitation, and apparently, it wasn't about a solo Being. There was a trio of Beings visiting.

The story continues:

...My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your

servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man, and he hasted to dress it.

And he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

Can you imagine having a profound spiritual experience and then attempting to tell the story of it to others?

A Pew Research Institute study found this:

About half of the U.S. public (49%) says they have had a religious or mystical experience, defined as a "moment of sudden religious insight or awakening."

Can you imagine one of those people telling others about their experience? If you've been in that position, you know it is almost impossible to do. You have little to reference but familiar forms of the everyday world. But here's the thing—the experience is highly *unfamiliar*.

Abraham's honor and welcome fill the verses. This is a divine visitation, and what's being pictured is the ultimate hospitality. Isn't it interesting he knew just what to do? He didn't ask, *Who are these people?* He didn't doubt the veracity of what he perceived. There was an acceptance that he was being visited by divinity. He puts his face to the ground and offers to serve them.

We live in a society that, in so many ways, has been taken over by secularism. Yes, religion is still important for some, and secularism for others. But who is open to divine visitation? You might feel a sacred atmosphere in a cathedral, church, synagogue, or temple. But we are talking here about a full-on visitation that we know for ourselves, and that is not dependent on a building, another person, or an institution.

The truth is the Divine visits us every day. It visits us in the thoughts that come to our head. It calls us through the Love in our hearts and the impulse to reach out to others. It visits us in the urge to express our devotion, to know it in our heart, to say it out loud, perhaps as a prayer. It visits us in the desire to live a devoted life—whatever is happening, whatever distractions there might be, whatever adversity, to affirm, *I am living a devoted life. I have that urge within me that I will not deny. I am being visited by that urge, and in that visitation, there is a Presence.*

So often, people lose or deny their capacity to relate to divine presence. Maybe they can't find a word that names it for them.

We do not live in a world that is just stuff—physical matter—and energy. Where I live at Sunrise Ranch, it is an ecotone, which is a transition area between two adjacent ecological communities, often rich in species diversity. Here, the Great Plains meet the Rocky Mountains. We are just over the first set of foothills where the mountains begin. Herds of elk, sometimes hundreds of them, visit our valley. Black bears, mountain lions, foxes, and coyotes live here. And all kinds of birds fly through and stay a while on their migratory paths.

Is all this just matter and energy? No, it is all alive. It is being. It brings the Presence of the Divine. There is a Presence in this valley where I live. It is a Presence in the soil, the granite rocks, the cactus, and the pines.

There is the spirit of Sunrise Ranch and its people, and in that spirit lives the Presence of Divine Being, known by us who live here. We touch it in each other. That Presence ennobles us, and if we are open, we see it in one another. It is not just a personality in front of us and not just a swirl of thought and emotion. There is a Presence that deserves to be acknowledged and honored.

Near the end of the 19th century, poet Maltbie D. Babcock used to stroll along the Niagara Escarpment overlooking Lake Ontario near Buffalo, New York. He would tell his wife he was going out to see his Father's world. After he died in 1901, his close friend, Franklin L. Sheppard, set the poem to music. The tune he used was from a traditional English melody with the Latin name *Terra Beata*, which means *blessed earth*. The song became the much-beloved hymn *This Is My Father's World*. It includes these lines:

*This is my Father's world,
And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world:
He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,
He speaks to me everywhere.*

It sounds like a divine visitation to me. He found a way to share that experience, and that is what touches people's hearts around the world so deeply when they hear these words.

Divine visitation is available to anyone who will open to it. In the story of Abraham, you can feel his great, open heart. He didn't have an instruction book on how to greet that Presence. There was no Common Book of Prayer, no prescribed ritual or belief. He sat at the door of his tent, welcomed the visitation, and relied on his inborn urge to greet the Divine.

There is a primal knowing in us that knows how to welcome and honor Divine presence. And the more we welcome and honor it—the more we invite it in—the more we become aware that it is there. And by the very nature of Presence, it is a reality we have the opportunity to share in common. There is the Presence through you and the Presence through me. But it is one Presence.

Shall we invoke this Presence for ourselves and for the world?

*Be here. Be here with us. Be here through us.
Come, feel at home in this space. We welcome
you. We feed you with our Love. We nurture
you with our devotion.*

It is good to take steps together to reclaim this instrument of reconnection with our primal spirituality—the welcoming of divine visitation, so that we may be a blessing to all families of the world.

Behind the current crises the world faces, there is a spiritual crisis. And here is the answer—reclaiming the instruments of reconnection with our Source Reality.

In our own reconnection, we invite reconnection for all the world.

*People of Israel...
People of Gaza...
People of Ukraine...
People of Russia...
All people, near and far...
Hear us.
We are one people with one Source.
We are one body of humankind.
There is One Presence that lives through us all.
Let us remember.*

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