

Rabbi's Column – December 9, 2019

First, Todah Rabbah for all the good wishes and birthday gifts, including the very nice group of people who showed up for last Friday night's service. Andrea went above and beyond in providing plenty of food for the crowd.

Second, Purim is fast approaching (in March) - so, if you play a musical instrument, please see me so we can go over what you would like to provide back-up accompaniment for. Otherwise, you might be stuck with my guitar playing.

On to some main topics:

In this week's Torah Portion, Jacob comes home and brings his entire family. It is a good thing he wound up doing quite well for himself during the last six years or so - he still has quite a number of beasts even after giving a large number to his brother. There are some troublesome incidents while Jacob finds a good place to live. The portion ends with a review of Esav's family tree, setting the scene for the following week when Joseph's story takes over.

Israel is heading for yet another set of elections. Great Britain has some important elections during the coming week. As it has happened, the party with which the majority of British Jews have identified over the past few decades has become overwhelmingly antisemitic (and has kept on denying their antisemitism). The other party that has a chance of winning a majority in Parliament boasts a leader who appears to be somewhat Islamophobic, and in general the party does not reflect the opinions that many British Jews hold. Here's hoping that there is safety for our family in Britain before, during and after the election there.

If you can make it on Tuesday, please go to some part of the celebration. Please go to the website: <https://travelwyoming.com/suffrage-events> for a full listing of events, beginning at 8 a.m.

Please keep in mind the following, as a way to increase kindness in the world (I am using first person language in these statements. Feel free to apply them to yourself as well): Once I have made a statement of fact or opinion, people have a right to disagree with me. Even on a statement that I consider completely factual. Once I have stated an opinion on something, people have a right to think and state that the opinions I hold are, well, stupid. I have a right to retain my opinion for as long as I desire. I have a right to change my opinion at any time. When I agree that a person can hold an opinion different than mine, that does not automatically mean that I agree with that other person's opinion. I have the right to let other people state opinions without arguing with them about that opinion, even in cases where I disagree with them. I have the right (and for self-care, the obligation) to not get involved in cases where two people are engaged in dueling insults.

There are other obligations I have in terms of Lashon HaRa and Rechilut. Above all, I have the obligation to not embarrass anyone who might not have the grasp I do on the topic.

May your week be filled with kind conversations.