

## Rabbi's Column

We interrupt the regularly scheduled educational segment to bring you an update of where you might have seen me during the past week.

Perhaps it was on Tuesday evening while attending a speech by a Holocaust speaker, where, on the serendipity highway, I met one of the new clergy in town. As both of us had brought our spouses, they also met each other. The pastor of the North Cheyenne Baptist Church has found his way to Torah Thursday and Shabbat morning services. When I mentioned we were studying Genesis, he began reciting, in Hebrew, the first several verses of that text.

It might have been on Wednesday night, where I was part of the religious panel associated with The Bridge art exhibit at UW in Laramie. Two of the panel members were from Cheyenne, and two were from Laramie. The moderator and one of the panelists expressed interest in knowing what is happening with the Cheyenne Interfaith Council, so I forwarded to them a copy of the email I had already arranged to send out.

For privacy reasons, you would not have seen me on Friday as I visited with a person at the VA in the newly built area who requested a Rabbi.

There were other things I did during the week, but those were the places I went.

Now, back to the abbreviated regularly scheduled program:

Back to basics: Rosh HaShanah, the Fast of Gedaliah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, Simchat Torah - all of these occur during this quite busy month. The next month, Heshvan, is also called MarHeshvan (bitter Heshvan), as Heshvan is the only month without some religious ceremony. Many of us are just glad of a little breathing spell.

Fair to Middling: In Israel and many Reform congregations, Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are combined into one day. This may seem no different than combining any other two festivals into one day, but this means that the community will be involved in both rejoicing with the Torah as we complete it and start all over again and Yizkor - all on the same day. Emotional whiplash, anyone?

Beyond the beyond: It used to be that every community had their own Simchat Torah celebration. Not only in space, but in time, as every community had their own schedule for completing the Torah, and their own practice of what was read when. (The general practice was to read a verse, translate it, interpret it, and then talk about it. Then go to the next verse, and do this for at least 21 verses.) There are some hints concerning this practice in the Mekhilta, one of the Halachic Midrash collections out there. The Mekhilta is about Exodus. (The other two are Sifra (The Book, about Leviticus) and Sifrei (the Books, about Numbers and Deuteronomy))