



Jewish Community Center of Paramus
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A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner

Friday August 4, 2023 ~ Parsha: Ekev

Analytics

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

For many years, I have written a Shabbat message to the congregation each week. Those who read these messages know that I write about a variety of topics. One week it might be a political or social issue that we face as Americans. Another might be about Israel. Sometimes I like to concentrate on something distinctly religious, like an upcoming holiday or other day or event of Jewish significance. Other weeks, I like to deal with more secular concerns. I write about the things that we are all thinking about and at other times, I write about the things that I'm thinking about and reading about and want to share with you. I rarely know when I send my Shabbat message what the next week's topic will be. That's part of the challenge and the fun. My goal is to make these weekly messages interesting and readable (and occasionally entertaining) for you and give you something to think about.

Several years ago, I changed the format of my Shabbat message. If you are reading this message, you know that now I announce the title and invite you to click on the link that takes you to my blog, my internet-based collection of my Shabbat messages. I am grateful for those who read my message each week and for the feedback that some of you share with me. But I've noticed something in the past six months. Whereas I don't know exactly who is reading, I do know how many people are reading. As you know I am a big believer in our right to privacy, so I want to repeat what I just wrote. We do not have any idea who is actually clicking on my message and reading it. We are not the CIA, FBI or anything like that! We do receive information about how many are actually clicking and reading the content. Reviewing the statistics for the past year, I noticed something striking, and even a little disappointing. I've noticed that the more

secular and universal the message, the greater the number of readers. The more particular or specifically Jewish the message is, the fewer the number of readers.

Let me give you an example. Several months ago I wrote about implicit bias and how it affects us and our decision making. Twice as many people read that message than the message about the sale of *chametz* on Passover one month later. I wrote a column called *More Good News* which also had twice the number of readers as a message several weeks later about the fast day of the 17th of the Hebrew month of Tammuz. My message about *Tisha B'av* last week was only read by one quarter of the number of people who read my message about Taylor Swift last fall.

There is a famous Jewish joke about a new Rabbi of a synagogue who wants to make a good impression. On his first Shabbat he preaches an amazing sermon about the importance of Kashrut, the Jewish dietary laws. Two days later, he was heartbroken when the President of the synagogue came to his office and told him that the community did not like the sermon. So the next Shabbat, he gave an impassioned sermon about the beauty and meaning of Shabbat. Two days later, the President again visited him and told him that the congregation was not impressed. The next week, he gave a brilliant sermon about the upcoming holiday of Passover. And again, two days later the President of the synagogue came to his office, only this time he was very angry. He again criticized the sermon, only this time the Rabbi wasn't having it. The Rabbi in his frustration yelled at the President, "what's wrong with my message? Have I not done the job you have asked me to do?" To which the President replied, "Think about your past three sermons. Kashrut. Shabbat. and Passover! Why don't you try to talk about something Jewish for a change?"

I feel like that Rabbi sometimes. In trying to come up with messages that are intelligent, interesting and worthy of your time, I like to write about different things and share different ideas. But a Rabbi's primary responsibility is to try to teach and help his/her community better understand the great Jewish heritage in all of its profundity. So whether my Shabbat message is universal or particular, social, political or uniquely spiritual, my great hope is to try to help you to better understand how Jewish values and observance can uplift and enrich our lives.

I thank you for reading my Shabbat messages and look forward to your continued interest.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner