



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

Friday October 9, 2026 ~ Parshat Beresheit

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

From Yankee Stadium to the Garden of Eden

Wednesday night's playoff game was not only a bitter loss for the Yankees and millions of fans everywhere, but an unexpected source of sermon ideas that deal with living the kind of life we prayed to achieve on the High Holidays.

In the sixth inning, Anthony Volpe hit what initially appeared to be a two-run home run that would have tied the game. Yankee Stadium erupted. Unfortunately, a fan reached over the outfield wall and interfered with the ball. After reviewing the play, the officials determined that it would have remained in the ballpark. The home run became a double. One run scored instead of two. The Yankees eventually lost, 4–3, and their season was over.

Now for Yankees fans, there was plenty to be unhappy about. But what interested me most was manager Aaron Boone's response afterward. "I thought they got it right." This is not the sentence you generally expect from someone whose season has just ended. Usually, this is an excellent opportunity to question the umpires' eyesight, judgment, heredity, and qualifications for employment. But Boone acknowledged that the officials had made the correct call. He did not have to like the result to recognize that it was fair.

And Yankees fans have experienced the other side of this story.

Almost exactly thirty years ago, in the 1996 playoffs against Baltimore, then-twelve-year-old Jeffrey Maier reached over the outfield wall and [interfered](#) with a ball hit by Derek Jeter. The umpires mistakenly ruled it a home run, tying the

game. The Yankees went on to win, and Maier became a celebrity among grateful Yankees fans. Apparently, interference looks considerably better in pinstripes! This time, replay allowed the officials to correct the call. This time, there was considerably less celebrating in the Bronx.

To be fair, the plays were not identical. But they raise a question worth asking: Can we recognize an injustice when we benefit from it? Can we acknowledge fairness when we are the ones disappointed? Fairness should no more depend on which team's jersey we are wearing than justice should depend on our relationship with the judge.

And that brings us to the Torah reading for this Shabbat, Parshat *Beresheit*, the first reading of the new year. This week, we return to creation, the Garden of Eden, and humanity's first encounter with a rule it would rather not follow. God establishes a prohibition. The serpent challenges it, telling Eve that eating the forbidden fruit will make human beings like God, "knowing good and evil."

There are many ways to understand this mysterious story. But one way to read the temptation is as an invitation to become our own ultimate authority. Why should someone else determine what is permitted? Why should a rule stand between us and something we want?

Adam and Eve live in a garden filled with blessings. Yet the restriction captures their attention. (It seems that even in paradise, human beings can find something about which to complain.)

We recognize the problem. We believe in fairness. We believe rules should be applied consistently, decisions should rest on evidence, and people should acknowledge their mistakes. And we are particularly enthusiastic about that last principle when the mistakes belong to someone else.

We respect the umpire until the call costs our team a run. We value a teacher's judgment until the criticism concerns our child. We believe agreements should be honored until keeping our own commitment becomes inconvenient or expensive.

Then we discover nuance, or find exceptions and extenuating circumstances.

Surely anyone can see that our situation is different.

And sometimes it is. Rules can be unjust. Authorities can be mistaken. Judaism does not require us to accept every decision without question. There is ample room in Jewish life for an argument. Some might say we have developed that room into an entire addition. But we still need to ask: Are we objecting because the decision is wrong, or because we do not like what it costs us?

That is a significant question, with profound implications. After all, a principle that applies only when we win is a preference masquerading as a principle.

The real test comes when fairness requires us to concede something. Can we admit that criticism was deserved? Can we acknowledge someone else's legitimate claim? Can we recognize a valid argument from a person we usually disagree with?

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner