Deariest Members and Friends,

Just over twenty-five years ago, on January 12, 1995, an extremely controversial wildlife experiment was initiated at Yellowstone National Park. Eight Canadian wolves were released into the park following a decision to reintroduce the species there after an absence of almost seventy years. For centuries wolves had thrived at Yellowstone, but relentless hunting and killing ultimately led to their complete local extinction.

Clearly, and perhaps understandably, no one in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries valued the presence of wolves in the wild. At Yellowstone in particular, wolves were considered undesirable predators, and deliberately targeted and eventually extirpated by a combination of rangers and tourists. But once they were gone, the local ecosystem underwent a rapid and dramatic change.

Among other things, local elk multiplied exponentially, without any natural predators to keep their numbers in check. This, in turn, led to a deterioration of the local plant life and soil conditions. Park rangers tried to cull the elk population to stem the plant and soil decline; but although they managed to halt the ecological deterioration, their actions inexplicably did nothing to repair the damage that had already occurred.

Eventually, it became evident that the problem required a different, out-of-the-box solution. In 1944, the respected conservationist and ecologist Aldo Leopold, who at one time had been a powerful advocate for predator reduction, suddenly changed tack. In retrospect, Leopold wrote, the deliberate extermination of wolves at Yellowstone had been a tragic mistake. Swallowing his pride, he recommended their reintroduction as the only way to ensure a return to healthy ecological balance.

Discussion back and forth continued for decades, but nothing was done, with a fear of the unknown deterring any concrete action. Although everyone now accepted that the lack of wolves at Yellowstone had created the problem, no one was confident that their reintroduction would reverse the decline their disappearance had precipitated.

But today, twenty-five years after local politicians and other stakeholders finally took the plunge and released those eight wolves into Yellowstone, the results are there for all to see. Firstly, the wolf population is approximately 60
divided into eight separate packs. At its height, the number of wolves has reached over 100, but the present number is not something that worries local environmentalists, who see it as part of the natural ebb and flow of local flora and fauna.

But of far greater significance is how the reintroduction has affected everything else. The elk population, as predicted, declined dramatically. However, that decline was almost double what had been expected. The elk decline has also resulted in some notable changes in local flora, and simultaneously their behavior has significantly changed under the pressure of constant predation; they have moved into less favorable habitats and their stress levels are quite elevated, so that both their nutrition and overall birth rate have noticeably suffered.

Local coyotes have also declined in number. Before 1995 Yellowstone was home to one of the densest coyote populations in America; by 1997 the pre-wolf population of coyotes was reduced by over 50%. Meanwhile, coyotes who had kept the fox population down, which means there has been a dramatic rise in fox numbers, as well as other coyote prey, such as hares and young deer, while small rodents and ground-nesting birds that foxes kill for food have all declined. All this has disturbed the equilibrium for certain roots, buds, seeds and insects, which in turn has affected bats and other small creatures.

As if this is not fascinating enough, Yellowstone’s beaver population has risen considerably. In 2001 there was one beaver colony, but within ten years there were nine. As the elk scattered, local willows revived – and beavers need willow branches to survive the winter. With all the extra beaver dams, the local watershed has changed, which in turn provides pools of water for local fish, in addition to increased habitat for moose, otters, mink, birds and amphibians. Likewise, the rapid increase in the growth of berries has seen an increase in the grizzly bear population.

All in all, the remarkable effect on flora and fauna that has resulted from the reintroduction of a few wolves into a vast national park is a vivid example of the phenomenon known as trophic cascade, where the introduction of one species can have a remarkable knock-on effect on other species where it lives and functions. At Yellowstone, just to get it all into perspective, a small group of wolves doing just what wolves do has measurably impacted an area of roughly two million acres.

The portion of Mishpatim begins with a discussion regarding indentured servants – Jews who must work off a debt by being sold or selling themselves into servitude for six years. At the end of six years they must leave their master, but the answer is simple: although those who have done wrong must pay their debt through servitude, once that debt is paid their absence from where they belong creates an environmental vacuum which will affect anyone who benefits from their presence – their family, their friends, and their community. Opting out of a society that believes for no other reason than that it seems convenient may cause untold harm and wreak colossal havoc in places you could never imagine. The servant might think to himself – who cares, I’m just one guy? – but the knock-on effect sends ripples far and wide, and his selfish attitude fails to take into account what God wants from him, and what he should want for himself.

If there is anything we can learn from the wolves of Yellowstone, it is that our presence in the place we belong has importance way beyond anything we could ever imagine or calculate. And if that doesn’t impact your sense of self-worth, I don’t know what will.

Wishing you Shabbat Shalom, and a great week ahead, "Rabbi Pini Dunner"
**Sisterhood Corner**

**February**

The deadline for ordering our annual Mishloach Manot Basket is February 28th.

Please join our YINBH Community in performing this joyous mitzvah!

**March**

Our next Shiur & Schmooze is Wednesday, March 25th, at 9am

Rosh Hodesh Nissan
Parshat Vayikra

Breakfast will be sponsored by **Cecile Gromis & Roz Rothman**

Shabbat Shalom,
Cecile & Ruthie
Sisterhood Co-Presidents

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**Sisterhood Corner**

**February**

Joe & Galina Samuel

**Happy Anniversary**

Joe & Galina Samuel

**Happy Birthday**

Robert Tanenbaum

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**Weekly Parsha Shiur**

Join Rabbi Dunner each Wednesday morning at 9am for the weekly ladies Parsha Shiur as he explores the weekly Torah portion through the eyes of the classic commentators. The next class will meet on

**Wednesday, February 26, 2020 at 9:00am**

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**Thank you to the following members who have ordered Mishloach Manot. Order yours now! 8 days left to order**

- Michael & Susan Baum
- Michael & Margaret Bayer
- William & June Brenner
- Steven & Vivian Dorfman
- Rabbi Pini & Sabine Dunner
- Marty & Eva Feldberg
- Howie & Shirin Fialkov
- Shawney & Richard Fine
- Harry Finkel & Shirley Aizenstein
- Aaron & Lillian Fuchs
- Jason Fuchs
- Larry & Judith Garshofsky
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- Jonas Herskovitz
- Jonathan & Faye Kellerman
- Ezra & Lauren Kest
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- Norman & Virginia Solomon
- Seymour & Grace Stoll
- Barton & Arleen Tanenbaum
- Sam & Sue Varon
- Michael & Sharon Weiner
- Robert Zeller & Nadine Gerson

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**YAHRTZEITS**

**Shirlee Katz**
Sheindel bat Shlomo a"h
Mother of
**Susan Baum**
Yahrtzeit—27 Shevat

**Raya Avromson Rambod**
Raya bat Rahamim a"h
Mother of
**Edmond Rambod**
Yahrtzeit—28 Shevat

**Brian Joseph**
Shimon ben Meir Yonason z"l
Father of
**Emma Almond**
Yahrtzeit—30 Shevat

**Irving Weiner**
Joshua ben David Baer z"l
Father of
**Michael Weiner**
Yahrtzeit—30 Shevat

**Richard Laks**
Yisrael ben Avraham z"l
Father of
**Hillel Laks**
Yahrtzeit—30 Shevat

**Mark Foster**
Moshe ben Gershon z"l
Brother of
**Lois Hirt**
Yahrtzeit—30 Shevat

**Sumer Feldberg**
Itamar ben Yosef z"l
Father of
**Marty Feldberg**
Yahrtzeit—1 Adar

**David Cohen**
David ben Chaim Menachem HaCohen z"l
Father of
**Hart Cohen**
Yahrtzeit—2 Adar

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**IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR**

**MISHLOACH MANOT 2020**

Join our YINBH Community in celebrating Purim with another fabulous Sisterhood Mishloach Manot basket.

Let us come together to perform the joyous mitzvah of Mishloach Manot & contribute to the Sisterhood's biggest fundraiser of the year.

*We are accepting orders from now until February 28th*

Cost to participate is $275 per household

A portion of the money raised will be donated towards the ongoing security costs of the Shul.

To order visit

[www.beverlyhillssynagogue.org/purim](http://www.beverlyhillssynagogue.org/purim)

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**JUNGLE SAFARI PURIM CARNIVAL**

**Monday, March 9th**

Purim Carnival 6pm

Maariv & Megilla Reading 7:30pm Followed by more Jungle Fun

Safari Snacks: Pizza, Popcorn, candy | Jungle Juice

Free admission with advance RSVP or $15 at the door.

Advance RSVP closes on March 2nd.

Pizza will be $2/slice and you can buy it at the event or pre-pay when you RSVP.

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**SHIUR & SCHMOOZE**

**WEDNESDAY MARCH 25TH, 2020**

**ROSH CHODESH NISSAN PARSHAT VAYIKRA**

9AM SHIUR

10AM BREAKFAST

FREE TO ATTEND

PLEASE RSVP TO OFFICE@YINBH.ORG

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