

How to Vote

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Prioritize your values. Decide what matters most to you, and will matter most to those who will follow.

Gather up all the strands of your character: Jew, American, urban, rural, male, female, whatever matters to your self-definition. Walking into the voting booth is like walking into a *sukkah* — the *mitzvah* is fulfilled by the entirety of one's being. An important vote should be cast as a whole person.

Vote with conviction but also with humility. We are often wrong, even about things concerning which we feel certain. Don't let your candidate's failure, should it happen, plunge you into despair. Don't be one of those chuckleheads who insist that if this or that person wins they are packing up for Belize because the U.S. is over.

Yiftach b'doro k'Shmuel b'doro. The Rabbis remind us that each generation gets the leader it gets. *Yiftach* in his generation must be reckoned as Samuel in his, though Samuel was the far greater figure. A Lincoln is granted us once a century, if we are lucky. We can demand competence, honesty and industry from our leaders, but not greatness. That is God's rare gift.

This is a remarkable, resilient country. The very act of voting is an affirmation of our gratitude and resolve to make things better. Have faith.