



# Carnegie Shul Chatter

## October 4, 2018



## Bereishis, in the Beginning

This week we begin the Torah cycle once again with the Book of Genesis, Bereishis, in the beginning. It is a truly fascinating book and it portrays something that has been debated for many centuries: how the world began.

But what was the very first thing that God created? The answer that I offer today comes from the book *Ancient Secrets, Using the Stories of the Bible to Improve Our Everyday Lives*, by Rabbi Levi Meier, that I talked about in a Chatter several weeks ago. Here is a bit of the first chapter of that book, which I hope you will find enlightening:

*So let's start at the beginning. How does the most ancient of ancient stories – the first of the Five Books of Moses, the Book of Genesis – begin?*

*"In the beginning, when God began to create heaven and earth, the earth was unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water."*

*The image is one of desolation and despair. It makes you shiver. It feels cold, dark, and lonely. It brings to mind those moments of despair when you have felt lost, could not see any order in the chaos of your life, and felt as if you couldn't go on. Perhaps in those*

## Light is Life

The divine light. The first thing that God created.

The light of God, that takes us from darkness and chaos and despair to a place of goodness, and order and gladness. A place where man can be at peace with himself and with others and with God.

It is really pretty easy to accept if we just quit trying to make it into something very difficult and take it for what it is: something beyond our comprehension, faith in our God and creator.

If you like science fiction and Star Wars, then call it The Force if you must. For it is, after all, the life force that God has provided to take us out of a world filled with darkness and chaos and despair to a world of light, of goodness, and order and gladness.

And that is the miracle of God's creation.





*darkest of moments, the most appealing answer was death. And that is clearly the image that is meant to be conveyed here.*

*But how does the story continue? "God said let there be light, and there was light."*

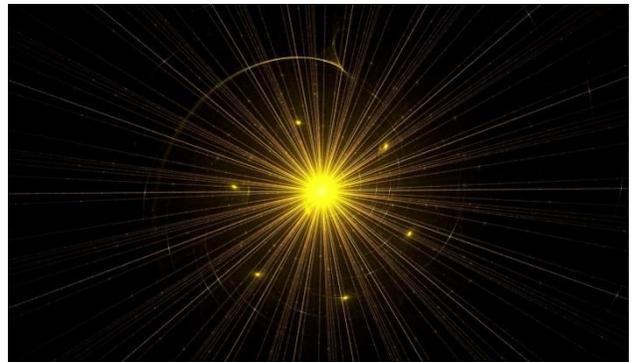
*Light – the answer to darkness. Yet could God really be creating light the way we understand it – as a source of illumination? That doesn't make much sense, since it is not*

*until thirteen sentences later, on the fourth day, that we are told that God created the sun, the moon, and the stars. But here we are on the first day – and obviously, there is no electricity – so where is the light coming from? It's a light that is coming from not the sun or the moon or the stars. It is not simple illumination. It is something more.*

*When we look at the original text, the answer becomes even more clear, because the Hebrew word used to denote light in this passage is ohr. And when we consider how the word ohr is used in other places in the Bible, we begin to understand that it doesn't mean an ordinary light, but a supernatural light. I would call it a "life force," specifically a divine light force.*

*So the first thing God created was life.*

*This light didn't take on that character of any being at first – not an insect, nor an animal, nor a human. It was a metaphysical, divine life energy that permeated the whole world. So there was only one thing that existed before the world was created, and that was darkness, which is a form of death. The first act of creation brought into being it's opposite – life. The life force. This ancient passage is telling us from its very opening lines that this is the way of the world. There will always be darkness and chaos and confusion. We will feel the void of death all around us and lapse into despair. But the Bible is also saying that if we want to help one another we must – like God – bring the light of our life force to that darkness.*



## Yahrzeit Plaques

Commemorate a loved one by dedicating a yahrzeit plaque in his or her memory at the Carnegie Shul. These beautiful plaques, mounted on the sanctuary walls, are lit on the loved one's yahrzeit, Yom Kippur, and days when Yizkor is recited. The names are also read aloud from the Bimah during services on the Sabbath of the yahrzeit and on Yom Kippur. To purchase a plaque, for only \$175, please email Mike Roteman at [mrmike7777@yahoo.com](mailto:mrmike7777@yahoo.com).

## Special Kiddush Next Week

Kiddush will be sponsored next week by the Brunwasser family in memory of father, Albert Brunwasser; aunt, Elaine Brunwasser; grandparents, Sidney and Minnie Brunwasser; and great aunts and uncles, Molly Brunwasser and May and Abe Apfelbaum.



# SOUTH HILLS Coffee and Conversation



**Congressman Conor Lamb** (D PA-18)  
Monday, October 8 ★ 7 to 8 pm

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**U.S. 17TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
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**SOUTH HILLS JCC**  
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★ ★ ★

**FREE AND OPEN TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY**

This event is "off the record" and closed to the media; No video or audio recording

Register: [southhillsjewishpittsburgh.org/lamb](https://southhillsjewishpittsburgh.org/lamb)



**South Hills**

# NOSH & KNOW

**with Rabbi Danny Schiff, Foundation Scholar**

**WEDNESDAYS, OCTOBER 17 - NOVEMBER 14, 2018**

**11:30 AM - 1:00 PM**

**The Artsmiths of Pittsburgh**

1635 McFarland Rd., Mt. Lebanon, PA 15216

## **JUDAISM & THE HUMAN BODY**

- 10/17 Tattooing and Piercing
- 10/24 Cosmetic Procedures & Enhancements
- 10/31 Visiting the Sick
- 11/7 Exhibiting Bodies
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### **\$50 for all 5 sessions**

Lunch provided, Dietary laws observed

### **Registration:**

southhillsjewishpittsburgh.org  
412-278-1780

### **Sponsoring Partners:**

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