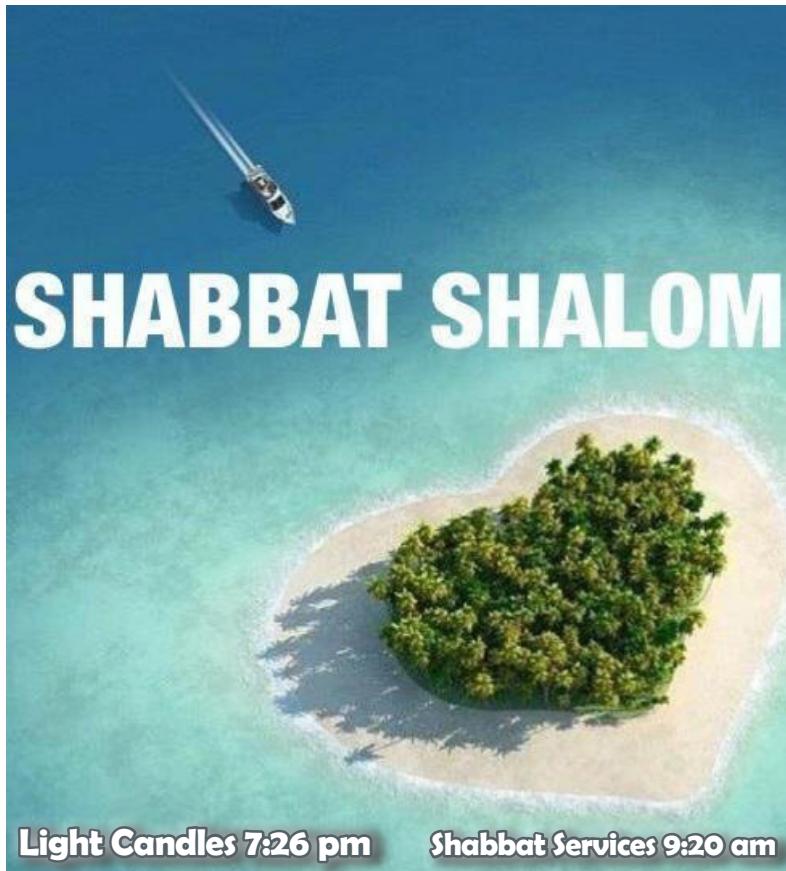




Carnegie Shul Chatter

September 5, 2019



Are You Prepared?

Well, the High Holidays are just a few weeks away and now it is time to start getting prepared.

I remember what my mother, and perhaps your mother, always said before the Holidays, “Oy, I’ve got so much to do to get ready for the Holidays. I have to clean the whole house. I’ve got to go shopping for all of the food. And maybe we should get the kids new clothes to wear to services.” And that was what she believed that preparing for the Holidays was all about.

Do a Little More

Poor Moses. He spends the entire Book of Deuteronomy trying to prepare the Children of Israel for their entry into the Promised Land. He warns them over and over of the temptations they will face, of the consequences of failing to heed God’s mitzvahs. And he knows all too well that although most of the people will intend to comply, far too many will fail, and the consequences will be catastrophic. And, still, there is nothing he can do to stop the people from making the wrong decisions no matter how hard he tries.

So why do so many of us fail to do what we know God has asked us to do, what our religion tells us to do? I guess it is because we are human and God has given us the freedom to choose, and often the wrong choices are easier to make than the right choices.

Should I buy a pork chop or a Kosher steak? Well, the pork chop is far less expensive and I can get it at Shop and Save, and I don’t

And although those things are all well and good, there is a much more important kind of Holiday preparation that we should all be thinking of doing during these final weeks before Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, a time when the Book of Life is still open, before our fate for the coming year is sealed. Because as important as a clean house and a fine meal and new clothes are, this other kind of preparation, spiritual preparation is far more important.

So how do we prepare ourselves spiritually for the coming High Holidays? Below is an article from jmoreliving.com that I believe answers that question very well.

How to Spiritually Prepare for the High Holidays

by Rabbi Yerachmiel Shapiro

Who could believe that the time has come again? We've arrived back to the familiar end, which is also a beginning.

It feels too soon, even with the late start of our High Holiday season this year. I've seen the leaves blowing in the wind. Every leaf that turns yellow and falls off the tree is a painful reminder that the great juggernaut of endless summer is grinding to a subtle end.

Poor summer, he never sees it coming. One day, he opens his eyes and realizes he's become an autumn.

And with the autumn comes our great challenge and responsibility. No, not the challenge of paying shul dues, seats and congregational pledges, or the responsibility of listening patiently to a panoply of sermons and familiar prayers.

I speak of the challenge and responsibility for each of us to undertake a full self-audit and spiritual review.

Hand in hand with the High Holiday season is the concluding book of the Torah known as Devarim, or Deuteronomy. In this book, Moshe conveys to the Children of Israel a detailed review of their history during the 41 years since the exodus from Egypt.

have to drive all the way to Squirrel Hill to get it, so why not just buy the pork shop? Easier to just buy the pork shop, right?

Easier, yes. Correct, no.

It is these seemingly easy everyday decisions that we make that ignore God's commandments and put us in jeopardy.

But now the Holidays are approaching. We have seen the consequences of ignoring God's wishes so many times throughout our history. So maybe, just maybe, this year we can try to resist that temptation to do the wrong thing just a few more times, and maybe do the right things.

You just might make Moses smile.



Looking back at the stories, Moshe derives lessons and philosophies, warnings and core values that become many of the most important ideas and ideals conveyed in the Torah. He looks back in order to plan for the future.

The High Holidays are no different. They are an end and a beginning simultaneously. The introspection and retrospection that our tradition has prescribed for this holiday season is based on the infinite wisdom that in order to move forward, you must first look back.

Or as Bob Marley once put it, “In this great future, you can’t forget your past.”

How could we ever think that it was possible to move forward with life without first examining and understanding the path we’ve traversed? And yet so few of us do it.

The daunting obstacle that keeps so many of us from taking a real accounting each year is that we just don’t know where to start. So I want to offer some practical suggestions.

Start by writing each of these questions at the top of a piece of paper — one question per page.

- *Which experiences from the past year am I going to remember years from now?*
- *What were the best things that happened to me this past year?*
- *What were the worst things that happened to me this past year?*
- *What mistakes or bad choices did I make this past year?*
- *What personal gains or accomplishments did I make this past year?*
- *Who do I owe a thank you, and who do I owe an apology?*

Feel free to add more questions, although I think these six are more than enough.

Go to a quiet, relaxing place where you can look at each of these questions and take a few minutes to think, jotting down thoughts as they come to mind. Try to mine your consciousness for answers that lurk in the deep, dark caverns of your mind.

Once you’ve hit a dead end, don’t stop there. Scroll through the entire year’s memories on your Facebook wall and review the 583 pictures on your phone that you plan to print out at Walgreens “someday.”

Jot down more answers and thoughts on the six papers in front of you. They should be filling up with the fruits of your memories.

Finally, get together, perhaps over coffee, with some of your best friends and your closest family mem-



bers to see if they have any more insight to help you understand your past year.

The treasure that you now hold in your hands is a complete accounting of your past year. This will be the most important thing you bring with you to shul on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

It will be your korban — the sacrifice you offer up before God. You are giving God the gift of your life, something that's much more precious than any lamb, ram or bull.

More importantly, you will have the tools in your hands to engage meaningfully in the process of teshuva (repentance), and isn't that the purpose of the whole endeavor?

Rabbi Yerachmiel Shapiro is spiritual leader of Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah Hebrew Congregation, also known as the Greengate Jewish Center.



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 mrmike777@yahoo.com.



Sponsor a Kiddush



Please consider sponsoring a Kiddush in honor or in memory of a loved one, for only \$36. Your sponsorship will be announced from the bimah and in the weekly Chatter. To sponsor a Kiddush, email mrmike777@yahoo.com.

South Hills NOSH & KNOW



with Rabbi Danny Schiff

Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh Foundation Scholar

Wednesday, September 11

Tuesday, September 17

Wednesday, September 25

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

The Artsmiths of Pittsburgh

1635 McFarland Rd., Mt. Lebanon, 15216

\$36
for all three sessions

Lunch provided,
Dietary laws
observed

“Twenty-First Century Love & Marriage”

Rabbi Schiff will explore the current state of Jewish love and marriage, and where it all might be headed.

Registration: southhillsjewishpittsburgh.org/nosh

Sponsoring Partners:

Beth El Congregation, Temple Emanuel, The Carnegie Shul, & JCC South Hills

Presented By:

