



# Carnegie Shul Chatter

June 4, 2020



Light candles 8:29pm

Service resume June 13

## Carnegie Shul To Reopen June 13

We are delighted to announce that we will be reopening for Shabbos services on June 13 at 9:20 am.

To insure everyone's health and safety there will be some changes to our normal procedures and to our regular way of conducting services. These are:

1. Enter through the front doors. No access code will be needed.
2. Take your prayer book and tallis to your seat with you. When services are concluded, leave them at your seat, where they will remain until the next time you attend.
3. Hand sanitizer will be available.
4. Wear a mask.

### Good News, Bad News

Let's start with the good. (We certainly need some good news after all of the pandemic news of the last few months and now the George Floyd news) — Allegheny County is now green and we are resuming services at the Carnegie Shul next Shabbos. Baruch Hashem!

Now for the bad — anti-Semitism just won't go away.

We sometimes think we know all too well what Black Americans feel, as we Jews have been the victims of hatred and anti-Semitism for far too long. But one big difference is that if you are Black there is no hiding it, everyone can see that you are Black. But if you are a Jew, it is not always quite as obvious. Yes, there are Jewish sounding names, but with inter-marriage, even a Rabinovitz might not be Jewish. But a Black person named Smith can still be easily identified as Black.

And would some of us wear our yarmulkas or tzisis in public if we weren't concerned that we'd be so easily recognized as Jews and subjected to possible anti-Semitism? I'm not sure, but I wonder.

Racism and anti-Semitism have been around for centuries. Will they ever disappear? I certainly pray that they will, but I'm not counting on it.

5. Sit only in rows that have not been taped off. Do not sit next to anyone unless they reside in your household.
6. During services there will be no parading of Torahs, and we ask you not to shake hands.
7. If you receive an aliyah, you will say the blessings at your seat. No one except Dr. Block will be on the bimah.
8. Gabbis will do their functions from their seats.
9. One person will both lift and wrap the Torah.
10. The procedures with regard to Torah reading have been declared ritualistically acceptable by Orthodox rabbis.
11. There will be no Kiddush after services. When services are concluded, remain socially distanced from other congregants as you exit the synagogue.

We highly encourage you to attend our services. You probably need a spiritual lift after all that has transpired over the last three months. We miss you and want to see you and pray alongside of you. We need a minyan so that people can say Kaddish. Please help us make that possible.

## News Behind the News



Nearly two weeks ago, on May 25, George Floyd died while being forcibly restrained with a knee on his neck, by four police officers in Minneapolis. All four have now been charged in connection with Floyd's murder as a result of that restraint, a restraint that continued even as Mr. Floyd was pleading to the officers that he could not breathe. The restraint continued even after Mr. Floyd lost consciousness. The restraint ultimately led to Mr. Floyd's untimely death.

Many Americans, both Black and White, have taken to the streets to protest the killing of Mr. Floyd and years of what they perceive to be unfair treatment of Black citizens by police officers. And while the protests have been primarily peaceful, some of the protests, sadly, have been accompanied by rioting and looting.

In Los Angeles, a spinoff of the protests resulted in anti-Semitic vandalism targeting Jewish institutions. Below is a June 2 *Jerusalem Post* article describing this vandalism.

In addition, you will find below two interesting thought pieces related to death of George Floyd.

# Kosher stores, synagogues, vandalized and looted in LA protests

Nearly 400 protesters were arrested in Los Angeles as demonstrations have continued following the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

By Jerusalem Post Staff

June 2, 2020 02:42



A number of kosher stores and synagogues were vandalized and looted in the uptown Los Angeles neighborhood of Fairfax, between Saturday night and Sunday morning, by people protesting police brutality following the killing last week of George Floyd, an African-American man, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Some of the synagogues damaged as a result of vandalism, graffiti and looting

by protesters include Congregation Kehilas Yaakov, also known as Rabbi Gershon Bess Shul, and Tiferes Tzvi (Rabbi Ganzweig Shul) on Beverly Boulevard in the Fairfax district of Los Angeles. Elder of Zion, a pro-Israel activist, recorded clips of some of the damage done to the synagogues in Fairfax.

It was also reported that Congregation Beth Israel, one of the oldest synagogues in Los Angeles and also on Beverly Boulevard, was defaced with antisemitic graffiti that read “F\*\*k Israel” and “Free Palestine” scrawled along its walls.

In addition to destruction and graffiti inflicted upon the synagogues, a number of kosher restaurants, bakeries and stores were ransacked by protesters, looting much of the merchandise and causing extensive property damage. Some of the stores impacted include Ariel Glatt Kosher Market, Mensch Bakery and Kitchen, and Syd’s Pharmacy and Kosher Vitamins, all located in the Fairfax district.

Richard S. Hirschhaut, American Jewish Committee Los Angeles Regional Director, condemned the acts of vandalism, saying in a statement to the Jewish Journal that “It is deplorable that certain protesters in Los Angeles today resorted to violence and vandalism. Sadly, their destructive opportunism included the defacing of Congregation Beth Israel, one of the oldest synagogues in Los Angeles and the spiritual home to many Holocaust survivors over the years. The epithets scrawled on the synagogue wall do nothing to advance the cause of peace or justice, here or abroad.”

Similarly, Liora Rez, Director of the Stop Antisemitism watchdog, also condemned their action in a statement to the Jewish Journal, saying that “once again we see vile antisemitism being

disguised as activism. To vandalize a synagogue during this horrific time does nothing but further divide a broken country.”

Meanwhile, protests have continued to impact much of Los Angeles and other cities after George Floyd, 46, died after being pinned down on the neck by a white Minneapolis police officer for nearly nine minutes. Derek Chauvin, the officer caught on video, was charged with third-degree murder on Friday.

Nearly 400 protesters were arrested in Los Angeles on Saturday, while Mayor Eric Garcetti announced a curfew for the city from 8 p.m. on May 30 until 5:30 a.m. on May 31. Curfews were also declared in other California cities, including San Francisco and Santa Monica.

## Other or Brother?

*By Rabbi Danny Schiff*

*Community Scholar, Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh*



It is not enough simply to repeat that we are all created in the Divine image. While true, and a magnificent affirmation, the statement is passive. The words do not demand.

Clearly, we are currently enveloped in two emergencies that go to the very heart of who we are.

And if there is one commonality between them it is this: they both take us back to the very first question ever asked by a human being.

What was that question?

The first question ever asked by a human being comes immediately after the first murder. Humans have only just appeared on the earth.

Only one tiny family exists. We have achieved nothing. Yet, immediately after arriving on the scene, the first born human being commits murder.

And that leads to the first question: “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

It is a question destined to resound through history all the way down to our present day.

It is a question that will be at the core of much of the sibling strife through Genesis, and that will preoccupy the Torah.

Who is really your brother or sister?

And what does it mean to be a “keeper”? The Hebrew word is actually “shomer.” A better translation is “guard” or “preserver.”

God never directly replies to this question. But the Torah’s position is unmistakable. In a world that answered the question in the negative, the Torah’s revolution was to insist that the response must be “yes.”

For the last few months, in hospitals around the world, we have been awed by healthcare personnel who have risked everything to save the lives of total strangers – individuals of every race, age, creed, and background.

Within a worthy nation, they have silently reminded us, we are all brothers and sisters, and so we have a positive duty to be “preservers.”

For too long, however, and in too many places, those who divide by race have insisted that people of a different color are “other.” Not my group. Not my responsibility.

It is past time to insist on clarity. In which category are our fellow Americans and our fellow Israelis who are of a different skin color?

Other or brother?

Judaism has an answer to this question: Brother. Sister.

And from that answer flows a responsibility: to walk in the world with a lens that sees all “others” as “brothers”...and to constantly remind ourselves that we have an affirmative duty to all those within our nation who pose no threat to our lives – a duty that instructs that their lives should be protected as our brothers and sisters.

There is yet much work to be done.

# I got caught with my pants down – my white privilege saved me

**White people take for granted the freedom to relax about making mistakes because the consequences are usually insignificant**

*By Daniel Geretz*

*Times of Israel*

*June 3, 2020, 12:58 AM*

This past January, I got caught with my pants down. This is what happened:

My sister had celebrated a “milestone” birthday late last year (her 29th – again) and had asked, as a birthday present, that all her siblings and her dad watch her run in the Houston Marathon on January 19th. The marathon starts early Sunday morning, and there was no way to get to Houston after Shabbat in time for the marathon, so we all decided to meet in Houston for Shabbat. My sister lives a long distance from synagogue — too far for my dad to walk — so we arranged to stay with some family friends who live about half a mile away from the Meyerland Synagogue. We all had arrived Thursday night, and Friday was occupied with shopping for Shabbat food, picking up runner’s credentials, etc. After the Friday morning ordeal, some of us decided to go sightseeing and some of us (me) decided to go back to our hosts to relax.

Our hosts have an alarm system, which they had told us they would disarm, and had given us one key. When we came back from shopping and unlocked the door to go in to the house, the alarm went off (they had gone out and had forgotten to leave it disarmed.) It took us some time to find the code to disarm the alarm. After waiting for a few minutes, and not getting a call or anything, the rest of my family decided to go sightseeing. We had a discussion about

the key. I told them to take the key, because I was going to be staying in the house. They told me to keep the key. I asked how they were going to get into the house if I was napping or showering, and they suggested just leaving the back door unlocked, which we did.

I do not travel well and was feeling under the weather (hence my decision not to participate in the sightseeing activities) so I went upstairs to attend to personal needs in the lavatory. Maybe five minutes later, the doorbell rang. Since I had my pants down, I was in no condition to go open the door. I did start to conclude my business in the lavatory. About a minutes later, the doorbell rang again, and I yelled that I was indisposed and would be down in a minute. A few moments later, two police officers entered the house (they had responded to the alarm and found the back door unlocked) and demanded to know who was in the house. I yelled that I was a houseguest and was upstairs in the lavatory, and they ordered me to come downstairs with my arms in the air immediately, and not to waste time washing my hands or anything else. Unhappy about not being able to wash my hands, I complied. Eventually, I got downstairs, provided my ID, explained what had happened, and they were satisfied.

Later on, I shared what had happened with my brother-in-law, a Houston native. He told me that if my skin color had been different, I might very well not be alive to tell this story.

\* \* \*

I thought long and hard about sharing this embarrassing and self-effacing story, and decided to share it, because it is a commentary on my own cluelessness about my white privilege.

We live our lives largely oblivious to what it means to be a person of color in the United States. My ability to tell this “humorous” story above about the silly and frequent mistakes we all make as we go through our lives is an example of my white privilege. People of color have no such luxury. They live in constant terror of making silly mistakes, which might suck in the police and end in tragedy. Over and above that, they, like all the rest of us, are subject to all sorts of random circumstances beyond their control which might suck the police in, and when the police are sucked in, people of color are not extended the same “benefit of doubt” that we white people are.

Twenty dollar bills are the most commonly counterfeited bill in the US, because the amount is large enough to make a counterfeit operation economically feasible yet small enough for people not to pay careful attention to whether a bill is counterfeit. Let me correct that previous statement: for people to pay careful attention if you are white. If you are a person of color, you had better believe that people pay careful attention to even \$10, \$5 and \$1 bills to



***A protestor holds up her hand while confronting police officers during a demonstration over the death of George Floyd, Friday, May 29, 2020, in Los Angeles. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)***

check whether they are counterfeit, because people of color are “more dishonest by nature and bear watching” (scare quotes to denote sarcasm, not a direct quote.) I deem it quite likely that at least some of us (in the US) have handled a counterfeit \$20 bill over the past few years, whether we knew it or not (see here.) The sheer non-remarkability of it is an example of white privilege. You can be sure any person of color, even before the events of last week, is keenly aware of the risk of running across a counterfeit \$20 bill by accident.

We go through life taking things for granted, like the freedom to shop without being automatically suspected of shoplifting, or the freedom to wait our turn to be served in a professional’s office without having white people “skipped” in line ahead of us, or even the freedom to relax about making our very human mistakes because the consequences usually are of no real consequence. And these are just three examples of things we take for granted — we take so much for granted that we can’t even enumerate what we take for granted. Imagine living every single day of your life, from the minute you are born to the minute you die, without being able to take any of the above for granted, and in constant terror.