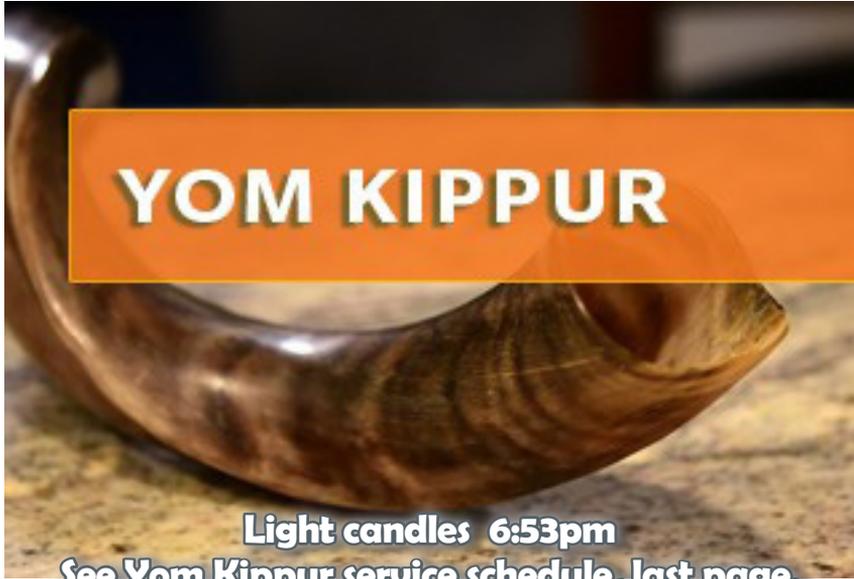




Carnegie Shul Chatter

September 23, 2020



Yom Kippur Approaches

I hope you all had a wonderful Rosh Hashanah.

Things were certainly different this year, but our observance of Rosh Hashanah at the Carnegie Shul was still very inspiring. Twenty-five people attended our services in person on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, and sixteen people attended on the second day. And our streaming of the services seemed to work out very well, with as many as thirteen families viewing online.

Our guest Cantor, A.J. Edelman, pours his very being into his davening and we are so fortunate to have him with us for a third consecutive year. Our President, Dr. Larry Block, again provided insightful sermons, and Rick D'Loss was awesome with his Shofar blowing.

Thank you to everyone who helped to make our services possible this year.

Losses to the Community — and the Jewish People

Over the past few days, I learned of the passing of four Jewish people who I would like to mention in the Chatter.

The first was a member of our Shul who passed away several weeks ago after suffering from a long illness. His name was Burt Dodick. A former Carnegie Shul Volunteer of the Year, he participated in our Shabbos morning minyan almost every Saturday, often coming when he was nearly doubled over in pain, until he could no longer make it this past year. Despite his illness, Burt was the guy who did the shopping for and did the setup for the food that we enjoyed at our Shabbos kiddushes.

Second, Michael Averbach, a member of our congregation, lost his mother, Rhondda, on Friday, September 18. In addition to Michael, Rhondda leaves behind

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Yom Kippur begins at sundown this Sunday, September 27. If you have made a reservation to attend in person, we look forward to seeing you at Shul. If you are planning to participate in our streaming, we hope you will find that meaningful as well. (Read below for the streaming details.)

As I did before Rosh Hashanah, I would again like to share with you a piece from the Chabad High Holiday Handbook, this time focusing on Yom Kippur. Following that is an article from myjewishlearning.com concerning the Book of Jonah, which we read during the afternoon service on Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur

“On this day, G-d will atone for you, to purify you.” — Leviticus 16:30

Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, begins at sunset on Sunday, September 27, and ends at nightfall on Monday, September 28.

This is the Day of Atonement, when terrestrial man most resembles the supernal angels. For close to twenty-six hours, we abstain from eating and drinking, bathing, or anointing our bodies, wearing leather shoes, or engaging in marital relations. Refraining from these everyday comforts emphasizes that we can be more than creatures of impulse and that we must endeavor to nourish our souls as we do our bodies.

On most special days, we do something to honor the day. On Yom Kippur, the day does something to benefit us. This great day, says the Torah, purifies us from all our wrongdoings. However, this atonement depends upon our doing teshuvah—returning to G-d—by sincerely regretting our past shortcomings and committing to improve in the future.



continued —

husband Donald, and daughters Shoshana, Nancy, and Debra.

Rhonda was a longtime member of Beth El Congregation, where she sang in choir. She was also an active volunteer at the Synagogue, Upper St. Clair Library, St. Clair Hospital, and numerous Jewish women’s organizations.

Another person of note who passed away on Monday was Rabbi Ephraim Rosenblum, father of Rabbi Mendy Rosenblum of the Chabad of the South Hills. Rabbi Ephraim Rosenblum helped to establish Chabad in Pittsburgh and also helped found the Yeshiva Schools in Pittsburgh.

And, of course, one of the great Jewish women of our time, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a champion of the Jewish principle of “justice, justice,” passed away last Friday after a battle with cancer.

May the memories of all four of these wonderful people be for a blessing, Baruch Dayan Emes.

The history of this solemn day takes us back to the generation that received the Torah at Mount Sinai. Not long after this climactic event, some Jews engaged in an idolatrous practice. This act, which our sages compared to a bride committing adultery at her wedding, damaged the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people. Moses's breaking of the two Tablets that he had just received illustrated that a real crisis was at hand. Moses in turn pleaded with G-d to forgive the people he had led out of Egypt. On the tenth day of Tishrei, the day that would become Yom Kippur, G-d forgave the Jewish people and tasked Moses with preparing another set of tablets to replace the first.

Since then, Yom Kippur has served as the annual Day of Atonement.

Jonah

A story about prophecy and repentance—but not in the way you think.

By Rachel Scheinerman

The Bible has no shortage of characters who heed divine calls. At God's behest, Noah builds an ark, Abraham leaves his homeland, Moses returns to Egypt (where he is wanted for murder) to free the Israelite slaves. And this is not to mention all of the Biblical prophets — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and more than a dozen others — who immediately act on God's command. Not so, Jonah.

The book of Jonah opens like other prophetic books of the Bible, with the formulaic "The word of the Lord came to Jonah." Just as "once upon a time" signals a fairy tale, this biblical formula signals a book of prophecy. But unlike other prophetic books, what follows is not an account of the divine words that Jonah received, but instead a story about Jonah who, it turns out, was a very reluctant, even recalcitrant, prophet.

At the opening of his story, God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh, one of the largest cities in ancient Mesopotamia, and the capital of Israel's most dangerous enemy, the Assyrian empire. It is rife with wickedness. Jonah is to warn the Ninevites that because of their sinfulness they now face divine destruction.

Rather than heed this call, Jonah flees in the opposite direction on a ship to Tarshish, across the Mediterranean Sea (in ancient terms, this is basically the other side of the world). Not one to let a prophet pull a disappearing act, God sends a storm to threaten Jonah's ship—and it is a doozy. The crew, terrified out of their minds, throw all the cargo overboard and each prays individually to his own god, to no avail. Meanwhile, Jonah sleeps in the hold of the ship, oblivious to the clamor and uproar. Indeed, it must



have been a kind of willful obliviousness — for who could sleep through the tumult of a storm threatening to overturn a ship and a crew of sailors crying for their lives?

Amid the commotion, the captain finds Jonah, wakes him, and demands that he join the effort to save the ship by calling on his God. Here, Jonah — a prophet who likely understood what was happening — might, indeed should have taken responsibility for the storm and prayed to his God to save the innocent sailors. But he gives no response, risking the lives of everyone onboard.

The men decide to draw lots to see who is responsible for the storm and the lot falls on Jonah. They question Jonah more closely and though Jonah's responses are minimal and cagey, eventually the sailors are able to pull from him the whole story of how he has run away from a divine directive.

At this point, Jonah has not only disobeyed God's command to go to Nineveh, he has willfully endangered a ship full of innocent strangers. Perhaps because he cannot see a way out of this hole of wrongdoing, and perhaps because he would probably die anyway, Jonah tells the crew that their only option is to throw him overboard — an act that will supposedly appease God and save the ship from the storm. The crew, decent men, insist on trying once more to row to shore, a desperate attempt to save the man who had callously endangered their lives. But their rowing is futile and the storm continues to rage, so they reluctantly toss Jonah into the sea, instantly calming the waters.

Throughout the telling, Jonah's disobedience and iniquity is highlighted by repeated use of the verb "down." Rather than follow God's instruction, Jonah goes down to the port city of Jaffa, then down onto the ship on the way to Tarshish, then down to a lower deck. He falls asleep, and then is thrown down into the sea. The message couldn't be clearer: Jonah is going in the wrong direction.

God sends a giant fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah had wanted to die rather than face his mistakes and complete his mission, but God won't permit it. There's an irony here that can't be seen in the English. The city of Nineveh is represented in Cuneiform by a symbol of a fish within a house. Jonah did his best to escape one great fish, only to be swallowed by another.

In the belly of the fish, Jonah finally descends as far as possible and hits (literal) rock bottom — the bottom of the sea. He spends three nights in the belly of the fish and with nowhere left to run, not even death, he finally repents.



Jonah's repentance is expressed in a long, strange, and beautiful poem that is spoken within the fish's belly, and the language indicates that he is ready to change direction:

The waters closed in over me,
The deep engulfed me.
Weeds twined around my head.
I sank to the base of the mountains;
The bars of the earth closed upon me
forever.
Yet You brought my life up from the pit, O
Lord my God!

Three days later, in a figurative rebirth, the fish spits Jonah up onto the land. Now, with a quick divine reminder, the reluctant prophet heads straight for Nineveh and delivers the intended prophecy: Nineveh is wicked and will be destroyed in 40 days.

It turns out that for wicked bad guys, the Ninevites are awfully good at repentance. Their change of heart is immediate and total—from the king on all the way down to the animals who fast and don sackcloth and ashes (signs of mourning and repentance) right alongside their human masters. The cartoonish image of animals fasting and wearing sackcloth is meant to emphasize the totality of the city's repentance.

We might have expected Jonah to be pleased. His prophecy has been believed, the city has responded magnificently to his words, and the people are turning their lives around. But Jonah is not pleased. In fact, he is furiously angry—and directs his outburst at God. To paraphrase: God, I told you they would just repent and you, being a merciful God, would forgive them. Why oh why did you send me on this mission? I wish I were dead! Rebirth, it seems, is short-lived.

Why was Jonah disappointed in the repentance of the Ninevites? Did he fear that their redemption would make a mockery of his prophecy (that the city would be destroyed)? The text doesn't say. What is certain at this point is that Jonah is in need of more repentance himself.

A raging Jonah leaves the city that is actively turning to God (thanks to his prophecy) and wanders into the wilderness. It may be that he is trying to die again (first time by drowning, now by dehydration). Once again, God won't permit him to perish without facing his mistakes and, where previously God sent a giant fish to save him from the water, this time God sprouts a plant to shelter Jonah from the burning sun. Despite his death wish, Jonah is relieved to have the plant's protection.

But the plant wasn't an act of divine mercy — it was part of a divine lesson. As soon as Jonah has settled gratefully into its shade, God sends a worm to chew the roots of the plant, killing it so that Jonah is left exposed once again. Under the intolerably beating sun, Jonah cries out to God in anger, and this time simply begs for death. In the final lines of the book, God speaks once again to Jonah: "Are you so deeply grieved about the plant? You cared about the plant, which you did not work for and which you did not grow. It appeared overnight and perished overnight. And should not I care about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons?!"

The Book of Jonah is read in synagogue on the afternoon of Yom Kippur. It presents two very different stories about repentance. On the one hand, there are the Ninevites, the evil villains of the ancient world whose sins are so terrible they merit destruction. And yet, the minute they genuinely repent — even though that repentance is, admittedly, self-interested — God is merciful. Their story highlights God's benevolence, the quickness with which God wishes to forgive people who want to make a genuine change, whatever their motivation.



And then there's Jonah, the prophet of God, who is supposed to be an exemplary person, yet finds repentance nearly impossible. Indeed, he never really repents, just continually runs from his mistakes — even repeatedly prefers death over repentance. Even his forced timeout in the belly of the fish does not affect true repentance. His case is never resolved.

Both messages resonate on Yom Kippur: repentance is staggeringly hard — but God's mercy is generous and swift.

Our Calendar

Whoops... the Calendar that the Shul recently distributed had an error in it and is being reprinted. We expect the new calendar to be available on Yom Kippur.

Tzedakah

One of the things that we are obligated to do on Yom Kippur is Tzedakah, and one form of tzedakah is donating to righteous causes such as our Shul.

As was mentioned here a couple of weeks ago, our incredibly low dues only cover a fraction of the costs of keeping our Shul going.

It costs us money to bring in our wonderful Cantor for the Holidays. It costs us money for extra security protection for the Holidays. We have utility bills to pay and other expenses throughout the year. And this year we spent nearly \$17,000 for a new air conditioning and heating system that we desperately needed.

Your contribution to the Carnegie Shul, your Tzedakah, will be put to great use and will be truly appreciated.

Please send your check to Congregation Ahavath Achim at 500 Chestnut St., Carnegie, PA 15106.

Thank You!

Recent donations to the Carnegie Shul:

Michael and Sally Averbach

Sharon and Larry Block, on the yahrzeit of Betty Kelson

Sharon and Larry Block, on the recent passing of Rhondda D. Averbach and Burton Dodick

Ruth Halle, on the yahrzeit of Ernest M. Halle

Dr. Robert M. Mandelkorn, on the yahrzeit of Rose Mandelkorn

Dr. Paul Spivak, on the yahrzeit of Helen Spivak

Bruce and Melissa Ungar

Yom Kippur Services

Sunday, September 27

Kol Nidre 7:00 pm

Maariv 7:45 pm

Monday, September 28

Preliminary

Service 9:00 am

Shacharis..... 9:30 am

Torah Reading... 10:30 am

Sermon 11:15 am

Yizkor 11:45 am

Musaf 12:15 pm

Recess 2:30 pm

Minchah..... 5:45 pm

Neilah..... 6:45 pm

Shofar 7:45 pm

Break The Fast 7:50 pm

Streaming Services

We will be streaming Yom Kippur services via You Tube. To view the services use this link:

<https://youtu.be/kJPjTmEvIGQ>

It will go live just before services on Sunday evening.

Our goal is to adhere to tradition as much as possible during the pandemic, including minimizing the use of electronic equipment during services. As such, we will “go live” with this link before Kol Nidrei and it will run continuously through the end of Yom Kippur. It will be running on automatic the entire time and no one in the congregation will be operating the equipment during services. Disruptions could occur due to electrical power interruption, internet disruption, or software hiccups, and the stream would stop. Depending on the severity and duration of the disruption, the streaming may restart automatically or it may not restart at all. No one will attend to such problems during services.