



Carnegie Shul Chatter

December 9, 2020



Light candles 4:35pm Services on Zoom 10am

Zoom in for Services

Join in for our abbreviated Shabbos service via Zoom, beginning at 10 am and expected to last for about an hour.

We will use our Birnbaum siddur which you may find on line and can download for free using the link below.

Join Zoom Meeting by clicking this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85933518705?pwd=VGY5ZVZiRDJYeK1pR2dicytKNtdlZz09>

Meeting ID: 859 3351 8705
Passcode: 050745

What a Latke Guy

My wife, Ellen Roteman, is not only a great writer of Jewish fiction, she is also a great cook and baker. So when Chanukkah comes, there is nothing I look forward to more than her potato latkes.

Most years, we have a Holiday party at the clubhouse of our Florida winter home, and everyone brings something for the others to nosh on.

Some people bring Christmas fruitcake. Really, how can anyone eat that stuff?

Ellen always brings her homemade potato latkes. And despite the fact that we Jews are the decided minority, I can assure you that the latkes are the most popular dish of all.

I can't imagine what the neighbors would think if they got a chance to sample her brisket or her home baked challah with cinnamon.

There is a lot to celebrate on Chanukah. There is the victory of the Macabees, and the miracle of the lights, but for me, I'd be satisfied if there were only Ellen's latkes.

Dayenu!

Link to “Birnbaum siddur”

<https://opensiddur.org/compilations/liturgical/siddurim/kol-bo/hasiddur-hashalem-by-paltiel-birnbaum-1949/>

You may also download the siddur using this link:

[https://ia801204.us.archive.org/35/items/PhilipBirnbaumHaSiddurHaShalemTheDailyPrayerBook1949/Philip%20Birnbaum%20-%20ha-Siddur%20ha-Shalem%20\(The%20Daily%20Prayer%20Book,1949\).pdf](https://ia801204.us.archive.org/35/items/PhilipBirnbaumHaSiddurHaShalemTheDailyPrayerBook1949/Philip%20Birnbaum%20-%20ha-Siddur%20ha-Shalem%20(The%20Daily%20Prayer%20Book,1949).pdf)

Order of the service

- Shema - pp. 343-349
- Torah Portion in a nutshell (from Chabad.org, appears below)
- Torah Commentary
- Mi'sheberachs for the sick – p. 371
- Prayer for the Congregation
- Prayer for the Government
- Psalm 145 – אֲשֶׁר - pp. 385-387
- Ein Kelohenu – p. 407
- Alenu - p. 413
- Psalm 92 – תבשה סויל ריש רומזמ - pp. 419-421
- Current and Upcoming yahrzeits
- Mourner's Kaddish – pp. 413-415 (if 10 participants on ZOOM, appears, transliterated, last page of the Birnbaum siddue)
- Adon Olam – p. 423

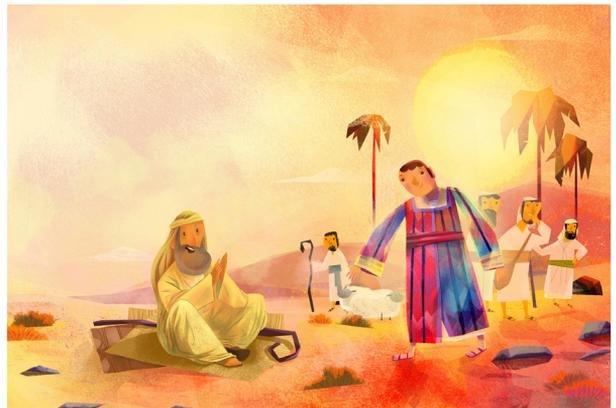
Vayeishev in a Nutshell

Genesis 37:1–40:23

Jacob settles in Hebron with his twelve sons. His favorite is 17-year-old Joseph, whose brothers are jealous of the preferential treatment he receives from his father, such as a precious many-colored coat that Jacob makes for Joseph. Joseph relates to his brothers two dreams he has which foretell that he is destined to rule over them, increasing their envy and hatred towards him.

Shimon and Levi plot to kill him, but Reuben suggests that they throw him into a pit instead, intending to come back later and save him. While Joseph is in the pit, Judah has him sold to a band of passing Ishmaelites. The brothers dip Joseph's special coat in the blood of a goat and show it to their father, leading him to believe that his most beloved son was devoured by a wild beast.

Judah marries and has three children. The eldest, Er, dies young and childless, and his wife Tamar is given in levirate marriage to the second son, Onan. Onan sins by spilling his seed and he, too, meets an early death. Judah is reluctant to have his third son marry her. Determined



to have a child from Judah's family, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute and seduces Judah himself. Judah hears that his daughter-in-law has become pregnant and orders her executed for harlotry, but when Tamar produces some personal effects he left with her as a pledge for payment, he publicly admits that he is the father. Tamar gives birth to twin sons, Peretz (an ancestor of King David) and Zerach.

Joseph is taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, the minister in charge of Pharaoh's slaughterhouses. G-d blesses everything he does, and soon he is made overseer of all his master's property. Potiphar's wife desires the handsome and charismatic lad; when Joseph rejects her advances, she tells her husband that the Hebrew slave tried to force himself on her and has him thrown in prison. Joseph gains the trust and admiration of his jailers, who appoint him to a position of authority in the prison administration.



In prison, Joseph meets Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, both incarcerated for offending their royal master. Both have disturbing dreams, which Joseph interprets; in three days, he tells them, the butler will be released and the baker hanged. Joseph asks the butler to intercede on his behalf with Pharaoh. Joseph's predictions are fulfilled, but the butler forgets all about Joseph and does nothing for him.

Carnegie Shul Volunteer of the Year

Wendy Panizzi was recently honored as the Carnegie Shul's Volunteer of the Year by the Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle. The Chronicle article follows.

Ahavath Achim - The Carnegie Shul

Wendy Panizzi is Congregation Ahavath Achim's Volunteer of the Year for 2020, in recognition of her commitment to the Carnegie Shul. She has served as a member of the congregation's board of directors and was recently elected secretary of the board. Up until the pandemic and the temporary cessation of services, Wendy took responsibility for providing provisions for the weekly kiddushes after Shabbos services. (Although Shabbos services have resumed, albeit with concomitant COVID-19 restrictions, our weekly Shabbos kiddushes have not.) Nonetheless, she has been actively involved in facilitating the shul's renovation and reconfiguration this year. Her continued service and support warrant her being accorded this honor.



Musings from Rabbi Danny Schiff

Facebook post, December 8, 2020

I know, I know – so often we find humans to be disappointing. We are contrary, lazy, self-absorbed, intolerant, uncaring, and callous. Add your own adjectives. The list of human failures is enough to drive many to despair.

But not today. Today is not a day for cynicism.

Today, humanity began to put vaccines against coronavirus in the arms of our first recipients. In the months ahead, billions will be inoculated against a microscopic virus that “went viral” and brought much of human functioning to a halt.

It is breathtaking. Vaccines that once took more than a decade to develop have been produced within a year. The accomplishment is astounding. On every continent, geniuses have emerged who have collaborated as never before, and have rushed to save lives and to restore us to our lives.

There will be problems ahead – not everything will go smoothly. But we should not take for granted that we have arrived at this day so quickly. We should stand in awe of all of the scientific developments that led to this achievement, and all of the cooperation and the utterly devoted breakneck efforts of the last number of months. It is stunning. The endeavor should be long remembered, and we should give thanks.

It is also noteworthy that the first person to receive the vaccine this morning was a 90 year-old woman. The vaccine did not go first to the rich and famous. It did not go to the young and promising. It did not even go to a healthcare worker. It went to a vulnerable woman in her final decades.

That says something about us. Something extraordinary. It says that long ago the world embraced a Jewish idea: that society should regard all life as holy, and that the strongest civilizations can be identified by the regard they have for those who need protection.

This is the week of miracles. This week we will remember a supernatural miracle of a light that refused to be extinguished. But this week, we should also remember this: that sometimes it's the natural miracles that we humans create that are the most extraordinary.

This week should offer us a small reminder that humans truly have the power to be miraculous. We can be transcendent, and generous, and giving, and wondrous, and inspirational. We can actually be miraculous when we stretch ourselves to be the finest we can be.

So alongside remembering the miracles of the past, let us resolve to help make the miracles of tomorrow. Having seen what we are capable of, why would we strive for anything less?



Chanukah

Chanukkah gelt, dreidles, menorahs, latkes. What could be better? Its time for Chanukkah. This year we light the first candle on Thursday evening, December 10.

Chanukah's Unlikely Heroes

By Rabbi Naphtali Hoff

In our long history, few individuals have threatened the spiritual survival of the Jewish people as did Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who ascended to the Seleucid (Syrian-Greek) throne in 175 BCE. In an effort to solidify his empire and fashion his own everlasting legacy, Antiochus IV worked diligently to Hellenize all of the people living under his control. However, no nation felt the effects of this effort more than the Jews living in the small province of Judah.



Early on in his tenure, Antiochus, with the help of his personally appointed high priest Jason, had a gymnasium erected in Jerusalem, within direct sight of the Temple. This gymnasium would serve as a center of Hellenistic education and athletics, where immoral conduct was the norm. Pagan statues and altars were present as well; sacrifices were offered to Greek gods prior to the commencement of sporting events.

These changes attracted many Jews, particularly Jewish youth. Many priests were also influenced by this new culture, neglecting their sacrificial duties in favor of these new centers of diversion. Most of the Jewish population, however, was stunned by the introduction of immoral Greek culture into their holy city and refused to embrace it in any way.

At approximately the mid-point of his reign, Antiochus intensified his efforts. He outlawed such core Jewish practices as sacrifices, Sabbath observance, circumcision, and the study of Torah, all at the pain of death. Simultaneously, he introduced pagan activities and worship amongst the Jewish populace. (I Maccabees 1:44-50)

When his edicts were violated, Antiochus responded with intense cruelty. On one occasion, he had two mothers arrested after circumcisions were performed on their sons. They were paraded through the streets of Jerusalem, with their sons clinging to them. All four were then thrown down to their deaths from the city's walls.

Most significantly, the Temple was polluted. On 15 Kislev, 168 BCE, an idol was erected there. Ten days later, exactly three years before the Hanukkah miracle, swine was offered as a pagan sacrifice upon the altar. The House of God was sacrilegiously converted to a House of Zeus.

What is most compelling here is the fact that paganism has always been a tolerant, inclusive

religious system. Polytheism by its very nature accepts the presence of other religious ideas and forces. Upon no other group did Antiochus impose such religious limitations. Clearly, he perceived that most Jews would continue to stubbornly resist any attempts at hellenization.

And indeed many Jews complied with the king's commands, either voluntarily, or out of fear of the penalty that was announced. But the best and noblest men did not pay him attention... every day they underwent great miseries and bitter torments; for they were whipped with rods, and their bodies were torn to pieces, and were crucified.... They also strangled those women and their sons whom they had circumcised... And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed, and those with whom they were found sorrowfully perished as well. (Josephus, Antiquities 12:255-6)

Throughout, the Jews responded with a tremendous resilience and strength of spirit, despite the threat of painful torture and death that hung over them. They resisted passively, preferring martyrdom to revolution.

Numerous instances of passive Jewish resistance are recorded. They include the story of Elazar, an elderly priest and leading sage, who refused to eat pork, despite the torturous death that awaited him. They also include a Jew named Joseph, who was brutally murdered for refusing to pillage the Temple at the behest of Greek soldiers.

Of course, no story better depicts the spirit of Jewish martyrdom than the account of Hanna and her seven sons, which pits the demands of a maniacal tyrant against a noble, defenseless woman and her family.

In 166 BCE, the struggle finally boiled over. Igniting the smoldering spark of Jewish resistance against the Seleucids was the elderly Matthias, from the priestly Hasmonean family. He, together with his five sons, would permanently change the face of Jewish history.

Persecution had forced Matthias to Modi'in, a small, inconspicuous hamlet situated to the northwest of Jerusalem. There, he and his family hoped to be spared the brunt of the Hellenistic efforts that were previously concentrated in Jerusalem. However, their hopes would soon be dashed.

Before long, Greek troops arrived at Modi'in. They instructed the Jews to meet in the town square where the pagan ritual, which included the sacrifice of a pig to Zeus, would take place. As the town elder and a priest, Matthias was called upon to perform the sacrifice (I Maccabees, 2:17-18). If the Greeks could win him over, the rest of the town would certainly follow.

Matthias glanced at the swine, the animal of abhorrence to the Jews. It was then, amongst the fearful anticipation of the local villagers, and under the watchful glare of the Greek soldiers, that he uttered his firm refusal.

G-d forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances! We will not hearken to the king's words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand, or the left. (I Maccabees, 2:21-22)

Defying Matthias's heroic stance, a hellenized Jew came forward to sacrifice the pig. At that



moment, the elderly priest stabbed him and killed the Greek commander as well. He then faced the crowd. Echoing the words spoken by Moshe following the sin of the Golden Calf some 1,500 years prior, Matthias challenged them, “Mi L’Hashem, ai’li!” – “All who are for Hashem should follow me!” (I Maccabees 2:27) Local inhabitants immediately pounced upon the Greek garrison, killing them. The war had officially begun.

Matthias would not live long enough to see the full consequences of his actions. Within a year of launching the revolt, he died. Before his passing in 165 BCE, Matthias left instructions that his militarily gifted son Judah become his successor.

Judah was the practical leader and military strategist behind the eventual success of the Jewish revolt. He inspired thousands to take up arms in the battle for the preservation of Judaism, and devised strategies for the Jewish forces to outmaneuver and defeat the larger, more sophisticated Greek army.

This revolt and subsequent war were the earliest of their kind. For the first time in human history, a struggle of this magnitude was waged over ideological and religious differences, rather than territorial considerations. In the ancient world, pagans did not die for the sake of religion. Only the Jews were prepared to do so.

Judah Maccabee is one of the great heroes in Jewish history. He is often viewed as a brave warrior and military genius, who led his men to victory against seemingly insurmountable odds. However, Judah’s true greatness stemmed from the fact that he never lost sight of the real Source of his successes.

It is easy for many to be defeated by few, for in the sight of Heaven there is no difference between saving by many or by few. It is not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from Heaven. They come against us in great disrespect and lawlessness to destroy us and our wives and our children, and to despoil us, but we fight for our lives and our laws. He himself will crush them before us. (I Maccabees, 3:18-22)

Judah’s heroism was rooted in the purest of all sources, a zealous love of his religion. He fought not for his own selfish end, nor from a passion for victory on the battlefield. Rather, a spirit of self-sacrifice guided him. He understood that G-d was calling to him. He could not decline his historic mission. In the words of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch:

It was not the courage of the Hasmoneans, nor the sword of the Maccabees...for whom (Hanukkah) was decreed. Lights are its symbols, not signs of might and dominion. It was not Judah Maccabee who defeated Antiochus of Syria; it was the Jewish light which gained the victory over the dazzling luster of Hellenic splendor. The spirit

which Matthias had harbored in his priestly breast and had nurtured in his children, was the rock upon which the Hellenic evil was smashed. This spirit... maintained the law amongst the people. (Collected Writings, Volume II, Feldheim, New York, p. 210)



More than anything else, Judah and his followers were “saints of the most high, without whom the Torah would have been forgotten from Israel” (Ramban, commentary to Bereishis 49:10). It was through such people that G-d would ultimately deliver His people.

The reign of Antiochus marks a turning point in Jewish and world history. Unlike the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians, whose persecution of the Jewish people was aimed primarily at our political strength, Antiochus took aim at the Jewish religion.

Had Antiochus been successful in his attempts at Hellenizing the Jews of Judah, all of Jewish and world history would have been permanently altered. Only the brave resistance of the Hasmoneans and their followers, who risked their lives for the sake of preserving their religion, ensured the future of the Jewish people.

Ellen Roteman’s Books Featured in the Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle

Our resident author of books for Jewish teens and children recently had her second and third books published by Menucha Publishers. Here is an article from last week’s Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle about Ellen’s newest books. You can learn more at her website <https://ellenroteman.com>

Ellen Roteman visits familiar settings and characters in two new books

Young adult novel and children's book arrive just in time for Chanukah

By Adam Reinherz November 30, 2020

Author, grandmother and communications professional Ellen Roteman’s two new children’s books, “Production!” and “The Case of the Unfair Science Fair,” each explore situations and personalities their readers will likely recognize.

Roteman, an award-winning former Jewish Chronicle writer who later served as marketing director for the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, wanted her books — both recently released by Menucha Publishers — to address relatable moments in the lives of Jewish children and feature realistic characters.

The new titles follow Roteman’s first children’s book, “The Case of the Disappearing Chanukah Candles,” published by Menucha in 2018.

There is a tendency from certain publishers which largely cater to Orthodox Jewish readers to portray children as perfect, but for Roteman, it is important “as a grandmother with some Orthodox grandchildren” to present children “as a work in progress, as we all are,” she said.



The children in both “Production!” and “The Case of the Unfair Science Fair” are “trying to be better and do what’s right, but they’re still kids,” she said.

In both books, whether the figures are staging a high school production, or partnering with siblings, classmates and friends to solve a middle school mystery, Roteman’s characters exhibit a range of emotions.

Not only was it important to the author that the characters solve their quandaries, but also that they act reflectively and feel bad when treating each other poorly, she said.

In “Production!,” readers enter the dramatic world of theater at Jewish girls high schools. Across the country, these productions have a tendency to take over the lives of students and serve as a rite of passage, said Roteman, and students often are charged with every aspect of the show — from performing the play and creating the scenery, costumes and program book, to selling advertisements and tickets.

“It’s a phenomenal learning experience,” she said.

Productions offer lessons in group dynamics and confidence building, while reinforcing practical lessons, like mathematics or design, she added.

Roteman’s daughter, now 38, attended Hillel Academy of Pittsburgh and Yeshiva Schools of Pittsburgh. Thinking back to those productions from years ago, it wasn’t only the students who were given a new venue for learning, but the teachers as well, said Roteman.

“The educators became educators in different ways,” she said. “I remember that the teachers and principals brought a wisdom that the girls really picked up on. Remembering how fulfilling this was for my daughter made me think it would be a good story.”

Prior to “Production!” Roteman had never written a young adult novel — “The Case of the Unfair Science Fair” and “The Case of the Disappearing Chanukah Candles” are both shorter in length and are designed for younger readers. As much as she believed that the subject of girls theater at Jewish high schools was ripe for mining, Roteman also knew the material would benefit from outside eyes.

As a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, Roteman turned to fellow authors for critique. COVID-19 changed the way the group interacted — meetings are currently digital — but the quality remains, explained Roteman: “These are a group of people who are very specific with their critiques and always find something kind to say.”

What Roteman discovered by sharing “Production!” and other writings with the group was that objective readers can see plot fissures or compositional flaws authors may be blind to.

“When you are passionate about your writing, you know where you want it to go and what you want your characters to do,” she said. Having an impartial party question certain narrative tactics can be really helpful.



Ellen Roteman
(Photo by Barbara Secher Greenidge)

Roteman credits past ventures and rejections — a manuscript she drafted about her father's experiences in World War II was passed over by publishers — with leading her to this moment of professional accomplishment as a young adult and children's author.

"You learn from everything that you do," she said, adding it is sometimes difficult to understand life's journey. "There are all of these steps that didn't feel worthwhile at the time, but they've taken me where I want to go." PJC