



Carnegie Shul Chatter

May 6, 2021

SHABBA SHALOM



Light candles 8:04pm

Shabbat services 10am

Behar-Bechukotai in a Nutshell

Leviticus 25:1–27:34

On the mountain of Sinai, G-d communicates to Moses the laws of the Sabbatical year: every seventh year, all work on the land should cease, and its produce becomes free for the taking for all, man and beast.

Seven Sabbatical cycles are followed by a fiftieth year—the Jubilee year, on which work on the land ceases,

"Our Family" Tree

As Rick D'Loss explains, "For many decades a large beautiful maple tree decorated our shul property. During the spring it produced a deluge of seed pods which many of us call 'helicopters.' During the summer it was full and green with branches growing out over Lydia Street. During the fall it turned golden before dropping its leaves. When I became building manager 25 years ago, the tree had already grown above the building, but it was manageable. I would go up on the roof (not a simple task) and prune the branches that grew over top of the roof and clean up the debris to keep the drains clear. As the years passed and the tree continued to grow, keeping the drains clear became more and more of a problem. The clogged drains led to water damage inside the sanctuary that we had to repair more than once. We consulted a landscape architect and decided to take down the tree. At more than 50 feet high, pruning or 'topping' the tree was not a practical solution.

— Continued on next page

all indentured servants are set free, and all ancestral estates in the Holy Land that have been sold revert to their original owners. Additional laws governing the sale of lands, and the prohibitions against fraud and usury, are also given.

G-d promises that if the people of Israel will keep His commandments, they will enjoy material prosperity and dwell secure in their homeland. But He also delivers a harsh “rebuke,” warning of the exile, persecution



and other evils that will befall them if they abandon their covenant with Him. Nevertheless, “Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away; nor will I ever abhor them, to destroy them and to break My covenant with them; for I am the L-rd their G-d.”

The Parshah concludes with the rules on how to calculate the values of different types of pledges made to G-d.

Who Are We?

This week we have another double portion of the Torah, Behar-Bechukotai, and it is one of the final aspects of the parshah that leads me into my discussion for this week.

As the Nutshell conveys, “G d promises that if the people of Israel will keep His commandments, they will enjoy material prosperity and dwell securely in their homeland. But He also delivers a harsh “rebuke,” warning of the exile, persecution and other evils that will befall them if they abandon their covenant with Him.” Sadly, the people of Israel did not always keep His commandments and the Temple was twice destroyed and the people have spent centuries living in a diaspora as exiles from the homeland.

— From previous page

Carnegie is very proud of the variety and quantity of its trees. We are one of 3400 communities in American designated by the Arbor Day Foundation as a 'Tree City.' Believe it or not, all the trees that line our streets, business district, and parks are catalogued. As part of that program we have a Shade Tree Commission that works to keep Carnegie green. As such, all trees that are cut down must be replaced. While the choice is ours, the Commission has recommended that we plant a Redbud. This is a species native to our region and is desirable from a several standpoints. It produces bright red buds in the early spring and fills out with large green leaves that have a beneficial impact on the environment. We have selected a variation called the “Appalachian Red” for our location. It will not grow to be more than 20 feet tall when mature. If someone would like this new tree planted in honor of a loved one, please contact any of the shul leaders or respond to this blog posting.”

The cost of replacing the tree is \$280, which includes planting and mulching.

Jews have traditionally planted trees in Israel as a remembrance of loved ones. Now we have a chance to plant a tree right at our very own Shul. Perhaps you might want to plant this tree in memory of your loved one. Please let us know if you would like this honor.

Yes, the State of Israel was created in 1948, and yes we think of it as the Jewish homeland, but is it really?

Well, the population of Israel is 9,327,000, and although Jews account for 6,894,000 or 73.9% of the population, Israel is definitely not just a Jewish state. In fact, 1,966,000 Israelis are Arabs, and that is 21.1% of Israel's population. And, in 2020, the population by religion was roughly 18% Muslim, 2% Christian and 2% Druze. And Muslims and Christians also have a special connection to Israel as the birthplace of their religions.



And, did you know, that the United States actually has more Jews living here, with 7.5 million Jews, than does Israel?

When I was a child, we were told in school that America was a great melting pot and that people came here from all over the world to be "Americans." And when we became Americans we identified as Americans. But do we?

Today we have African-Americans, and Asian-Americans, and Latin-Americans, and Irish-Americans, and Italian-Americans, and the list goes on and on.

But what of us? If our family came from Russia, are we Russian-Americans or are we Jewish-Americans? Is our identity associated with the country of our ancestors or with their religion? If Israel is a country that is not just Jewish, should we identify with our actual country, the United States, or with Israel, a country, not a religion, or both?

I drove by Community Day School in Squirrel Hill the other day. Flying on flagpoles outside the school were the U.S. flag and the Israeli flag. Why the flag of Israel? Don't we live in America, not Israel? If I drive past a school in a predominantly Irish section of town, do they fly the flag of Ireland along with the U.S. flag?

Israel has its own government and its own political problems. We strongly identify with Israel as a result of our Jewishness and our belief that they are the Jewish state, but their Prime Minister is not our President, their scandals (and they have had more than their share) are not our scandals, and we do not vote in their elections. So why do we fly their flag in our schools and synagogues? And why do some Jewish organizations here in Pittsburgh begin programs with the singing of "Hatikvah," as well as the Star Spangled Banner? Isn't Hatikvah the National Anthem of the country Israel, not the country The United States of America? And what would



happen if a Jew who did not agree with Israel's politics chose to "take a knee" when "Hatikvah" was played?

I love Israel. I want nothing but the best for Israel and her Jewish population, but am I a Jewish-American, or an Israeli-American, or a Russian-American, or just an American without a hyphen? Who am I?

Lag B'Omer Tragedy

Last week the Jewish holiday of Lag B'Omer was observed. According to myjewishlearning.com, "Lag Ba'omer is a minor holiday that occurs on the 33rd day of the Omer, the 49-day period between Passover and Shavuot. A break from the semi-mourning of the Omer, key aspects of Lag Ba'omer include holding Jewish weddings (it's the one day during the Omer when Jewish law permits them), lighting bonfires and getting haircuts."



Hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Jews and others also descend upon Mt. Meron, Israel's second-most popular Jewish holy site, to the gravesite of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, author of the Zohar, on this occasion.

The throngs that gather at Mt. Meron are more than the site can safely accommodate, and this year disaster occurred and 45 people were killed and many more injured as a result of a crush of people leaving the site simultaneously. We are truly saddened by this tragedy and our prayers are with all of the mourners of Zion.

Welcome

to our newest Carnegie Shul member, **Rana Evanoff**

Donations to the Carnegie Shul

Yahrzeit donations

Sharon and Larry Block, for Esther Kelson Herman and Abraham L. Kelson

Sondra Greer, for Hyman Lederstein

Paul Lederstein, for Hyman Lederstein

Lois Ash Metlika, for Emanuel Ash

Cindy Routman, for David Routman

Paul Spivak, for William Spivak

Nancy Stein, for Evelyn Wilk Kalson

In memory of

Alva and Richard Daffner, in memory of Richard B. Kelson

General Fund

Lois Ash Metlika

