



# Carnegie Shul Chatter

## July 29, 2021



Light candles 8:18pm

Shabbat services 9:20am

## Eikev in a Nutshell

**Deuteronomy 7:12–11:25**

In the Parshah of Eikev (“Because”), Moses continues his closing address to the children of Israel, promising them that if they will fulfill the commandments (mitzvot) of the Torah, they will prosper in the Land they are about to conquer and settle in keeping with G-d’s promise to their forefathers.

Moses also rebukes them for their failings in their first generation as a people, recalling their worship of the Golden Calf, the rebellion of Korach, the sin of the spies, their angering of G-d at Taveirah, Massah and Kivrot Hataavah (“The Graves of Lust”). “You have been rebellious against G-d,” he says to them, “since the day I knew you.” But he also speaks of G-d’s forgiveness of their sins, and the Second Tablets which G-d inscribed and gave to them following their repentance.

### Jewish? Really?

Before Abraham there was no religion that had a monotheistic view of one God as the creator of the universe. Then, when Moses came along, God gave him a Torah, the Ten Commandment, and mitzvot to live by.

The Shema was the prayer that Moses taught the Children of Israel proclaiming the Oneness of God.

Maimonides gave us 13 principle of faith to follow, and these principles are the foundation of the Yigdal prayer that we chant to conclude our services on alternate Sabbaths.

And yet, as we see in one of our articles in this week’s Chatter, Humanistic Judaism does not allow prayers or references to God. And they call this Judaism.

Shame on them.

Judaism is all about God and praying to God.

Shame, shame on any Jew who tries to change that.

Their forty years in the desert, says Moses to the people, during which G-d sustained them with daily manna from heaven, was to teach them “that man does not live on bread alone, but by the utterance of G-d’s mouth does man live.”

Moses describes the land they are about to enter as “flowing with milk and honey,” blessed with the “seven kinds” (wheat, barley, grapevines, figs, pomegranates, olive oil and dates), and as the place that is the focus of G-d’s providence of His world. He commands them to destroy the idols of the land’s former masters, and to beware lest they become haughty and begin to believe that “my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.”



A key passage in our Parshah is the second chapter of the Shema, which repeats the fundamental mitzvot enumerated in the Shema’s first chapter, and describes the rewards of fulfilling G-d’s commandments and the adverse results (famine and exile) of their neglect. It is also the source of the precept of prayer, and includes a reference to the resurrection of the dead in the messianic age.

## Olympic Jews

Did you know there is a Jewish Pittsburgh Pirate playing on this year’s Israeli Olympic baseball team. Yes, he is a Pirate, but no, he is not a Pirate player. Confused? Well, here is the story:

### Meet the Bucs staffer in the Olympics

#### A grandson of Holocaust survivors, Bleich will pitch for Israel

*By Jake Crouse  
July 27th, 2021*

PITTSBURGH — Many days this season at PNC Park, before either team takes the field for pre-game batting practice or fielding drills, there is one man who has been throwing bullpen after bullpen, preparing for his biggest moment in baseball.

He’s not on either active roster. His last season in the Majors was 2018. These days, he mainly does paperwork.

But Jeremy Bleich’s story is bigger than what’s on the field or his resumé, and he’s about to carry his tale to the 2021 Olympics this week, when he will pitch for Israel.

If you watched him throw his afternoon bullpens, you would have never known how big the moment approaching is. Pitchers step into the box, go down on a few pitches against the lefty, then relax and talk amongst each other. Other staffers, including grounds crew members, put

on a helmet and take cuts, including one back-foot slider that led to a hilarious attempt and laughter from Bleich and those standing around the batting area.

For Bleich, a Major League staff assistant whose day job includes research and documentation for games, it's one of the few opportunities the former 11-year pro baseball player has to compete with the guys he works with.

"I keep it loose," Bleich said. "In fact, I think it helps with some of the relationships with players. Instead of just some guy who sits behind a desk, it's like, 'Oh, you can pitch a little bit!'"



But behind that fun spirit is a passion for the game of baseball and an undying commitment to honor the legacy of his family, who survived the greatest atrocity in modern society.

Bleich's paternal grandfather, George, was born in Poland. At 25, he was forced into a concentration camp, where he survived in part thanks to his abilities as a leatherman, mending German soldiers' boots.

Bleich's grandmother, Yolanda, was from what was formerly an area of Czechoslovakia, but now is in Ukraine. She was moved between camps, including Auschwitz, and the Germans had her fill explosives with gunpowder.

At least seven of Yolanda's siblings died in the Holocaust, but she and George were able to escape with their lives. They emigrated to the United States, where they met soon after.

"If they don't survive that experience," Bleich said, "I'm not here.

"So it means something to me. There's definitely a family aspect to this, and I'm proud to wear the jersey and compete with a lot of these guys."

Bleich never got much of a chance to stick at the Major Leagues, pitching two games with the A's in 2018. However, on the international stage, he's played a pivotal role, most notably when he helped lead Team Israel to a sixth-place finish in the 2017 World Baseball Classic.

After that experience, Bleich and some other teammates decided to apply for dual citizenship to Israel, connecting him even more deeply to his ancestors. It also opened up the possibility to compete in the Olympics.

One year delayed, he's getting his opportunity.

The delay in the event, which is being held in Tokyo, offered Bleich a unique situation. He was hired in February 2020 as part of the Pirates' informatics staff, assisting the club in its

game preparation. Catcher Jacob Stallings said Bleich's role is critical to how he prepares, as every day, he walks in and expects a full written report from Bleich on the hitters Stallings will guide pitchers against.

"I really lean on those notes," Stallings said, "because my typical routine is I'll watch video of the hitters' recent at-bats, and then I'll go to his notes to kind of confirm what I saw. Maybe he'll have something different, and we'll kind of talk about it. He's been great."



In return, Bleich has been assisted by the Pirates. Beyond the job opportunity, he was able to keep his arm in shape at their facilities and against their players, not knowing when he wanted to call it quits for his playing days. Ever the learner, he still picks the brain of staff members and pitchers to prepare for the Olympics.

"The staff here has been incredible from top to bottom. To be able to just encourage me to get the work in, get the resources I need from any Major League player I need, has been really, really helpful."

Bleich's Israel team will begin its slate of games against South Korea, then a strong United States squad, which features former Pirate Todd Frazier. The left-hander is realistic about Israel's chances, but he realizes how weird baseball can be.

"Maybe we're not the most talented, but we're talented enough," Bleich said. "And in baseball, in a short sprint [with six teams], anyone can win. I told someone earlier that we're probably not built for a 162-game season, but I think anyone is built for a short sprint."

The 2021 Olympics may be the last time Bleich pitches professionally, especially given the long waits between international events. When asked about the competition in Tokyo this week, he called it "a beautiful opportunity for me to put a cap on a long career."

Whether it's his last ride or not, and whether Israel goes deep or falls quickly, Bleich is sure to have a big contingent cheering him home, whether in Israel, in his home state of Louisiana or in Pittsburgh.

"When he walks out, we're going to find out -- whatever time of the day it is when he pitches -- we're going to figure it out and watch it as a staff," manager Derek Shelton said. "... I'm super stoked for him and we're going to be cheering for him. It's going to be a really, really cool thing."

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Did You Know That One of the Two Flag Bearers for the United States at the Olympics is Jewish?

This year there were two flag bearers for the United States at the Opening Ceremonies for the Olympics and one of them, Sue Bird, is Jewish.

## Everything you want to know about Olympic flag-bearer Sue Bird's Jewish identity

**Bird holds both Israeli and American citizenship but represents her birth country (the U.S.) in international competitions**

*By Shaked Karabelnicoff*

*Updated Jul 27 2021 03:20PM EDT*

Sue Bird is a four-time Olympic gold medallist, the most decorated athlete in the history of her sport, and she's one of Team USA's two flag bearers at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics.

We're seriously kvelling.

Bird is widely recognized as one of the greatest players in the history of women's basketball — and one of the greatest Jewish athletes ever. She is the most decorated basketball player (male or female!) in the entire history of the sport!

With her track record, it's no surprise she was selected as one of two flag bearers, the other being MLB star Eddy Alvarez, to lead Team USA during the kick-off of the Tokyo Games. It's a huge deal.

Bird called it an "incredible honor" after it was announced on July 21st.

Here are some more things to know about the 40-year-old Jewish Israeli athlete who will be kicking off the Tokyo games.

### She's a New York native

Bird was born in Syosset, New York on Long Island to Herschel and Nancy Bird. Her dad is an Ashkenazi Jew with Russian Jewish ancestry.

### Bird is short for...

Sue's grandparents immigrated to the United States from what is now Ukraine in the early 1900s.



“My dad is like 100% Russian, and I have some really cool documents,” she told the Washington Jewish Museum. “My aunt, my dad’s sister, did a great job of saving everything. I have things like the boat ticket, the documents from Ellis Island where my father’s grandfather came over on a boat.”

Their name was changed from “Boorda” to “Bird” at Ellis Island

“They went through Ellis Island, like, “What’s your name? Boorda? Bird. Go through,” and that’s how ‘Bird’ came about,” she said. “That’s why my name is what it is.”

### **She’s a dual citizen**

Bird holds both Israeli and American citizenship but represents her birth country (the U.S.) in international competitions. With one exception — she did play on three Russian basketball teams during WNBA off-seasons in the mid-2000s.

She acquired Israeli citizenship in 2006 and said the decision was very much “basketball motivated” so she could play on European teams.

“When I tell this to people outside of basketball circles, it seems a little odd. But in our world, it’s, like, very normal. So that’s how it all came about,” she said.

“It was cool, because what I found was in this effort to create an opportunity in my basketball career, I was able to learn a lot about a culture that I probably wouldn’t have tapped into otherwise.”

### **Bird “basically” lived in Israel while in the process of getting citizenship**

“There’s so much culture and I’ve made some friends that are lifelong friends,” she said. “It was an awesome experience.”

Part of her family, on her dad’s side, live in Israel, she told the Washington Jewish Museum.

“People have this kind of different image of what Israel is, and what it’s about,” she explained. “Yes, there are military people all over, but there’s so much more.”

While in Israel, she spent the bulk of time in Tel Aviv but had the opportunity to tour around as well.

“Going to Jerusalem was an amazing experience. I’ve been two or three times. I went to the Dead Sea. I never got to go to Eilat, which I’m bummed about, because I’ve heard it’s beautiful down there,” she said.



# Is this Jewish?

There is a synagogue in Sarasota, Florida, that claims to be Jewish, yet it excludes all prayers and references to God. Can they really think this is Jewish? Here is how they describe themselves on their website.



## Our Practices

### **We Are The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Sarasota.**

Barry E. Wolfe, Ph.D.

Congregation for Humanistic Judaism-Sarasota

One of the newer branches on the Tree of Judaism is Humanistic Judaism. Humanistic Judaism is based in a human-centered philosophy that integrates critical thinking and scientific thought with a celebration of our precious Jewish heritage, culture and identity. It proposes that we as human beings possess the power and responsibility to make our own choices and shape our own lives. Ethics and morality require each of us to be honest, kind, and compassionate and to take full responsibility for our choices and actions. We celebrate human freedom and know that if justice is to exist in the world, we must create it together.

The Humanistic Judaism movement, which began in 1963, was the brainchild of Sherwin Wine, a Reform Jewish Rabbi, who came to believe that the evolution of a viable Judaism required that the principles of philosophic humanism supersede the historically central commitment to the commands of a supernatural deity. As the leader of a small secular, non-theistic congregation, Wine developed a Jewish liturgy that reflected his and his congregation's philosophical viewpoint by emphasizing Jewish culture, history, and identity along with Humanistic ethics, while excluding all prayers and references to God. This congregation developed into the Birmingham Temple in Michigan. In 1969, the Birmingham Temple formed, with two other congregations, the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ).

Secular Jews are committed to the Jewish values of loving-kindness and charity, of justice and harmony, and of education and peace as well as to Tikkun Olam, the collective effort to help create a safer and more peaceful world for all. We cherish Jewish identity and believe it is best preserved in a pluralistic democracy. We seek to foster a positive Jewish identity that is committed to intellectual integrity and ethical behavior. Humanistic Jews also believe that the freedom and dignity of the Jewish people must go hand in hand with the freedom and dignity of all people. Therefore, we support SHJ's backing of a variety of Humanistic measures: International religious freedom, Planned Parenthood, same-sex marriage, humanitarian assistance for refugees seeking political asylum. We advocate positive gun control measures, laws protecting the rights and dignity of LGBTQ individuals and families, and measures protecting the environment, among others.

The Congregation for Humanistic Judaism-Sarasota (CHJ-S) was founded in 1996. It is one of 28 Humanistic Jewish congregations in North America now under the umbrella of the SHJ. CHJ-S

offers lay-led services on a regular basis as well as expert speakers who give presentations on topics that are of critical concern to secular Jews. We offer interest groups (e.g., films, books, music, & Jewish History), social action activities and social events. We celebrate the High Holidays and Passover as well as other Jewish festivals and holidays. We welcome all people who feel they want to share a Humanistic Jewish way of life within a warm and friendly congregation. We invite anyone who might be interested in our services, speakers, or in getting to know a community of kind, creative, interesting, and caring people to try us out. Whether you decide to join us or not, we welcome your attendance at any of our services or programs. We are recognized by and affiliated with the Sarasota-Manatee Jewish Federation and the Synagogue Council.