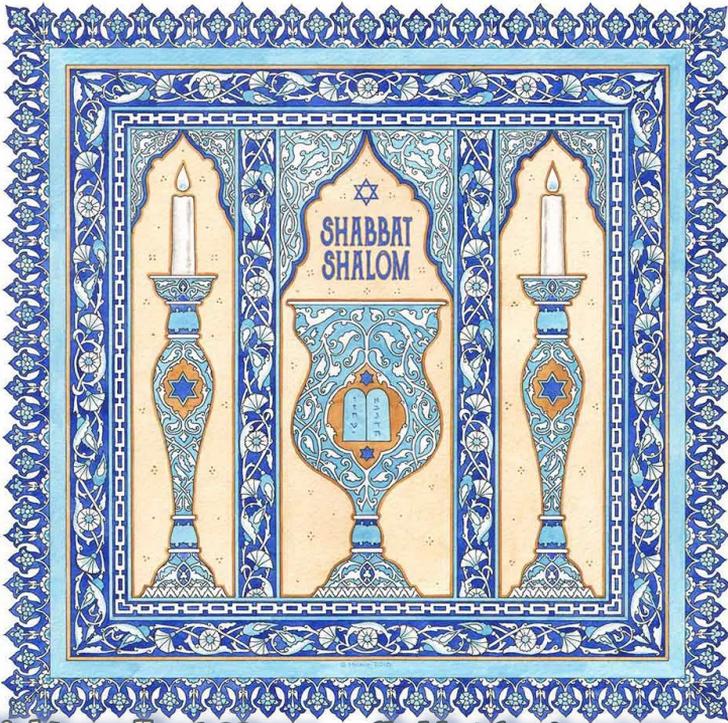




Carnegie Shul Chatter

March 9, 2023



Light candles 6:03 pm Shabbat Services 9:30am

Shabbat Services

Join us in the sanctuary, providing you have been vaccinated for Covid 19, or attend virtually. Watch your email for a Zoom link or contact Rosalyn Hoffman at rjlynman@yahoo.com. The complete Torah reading, in Hebrew and English, can be found at https://www.chabad.org/parshah/torahreading_cdo/aid/2492674/jewish/Ki-Tisa-Torah-Reading.htm

Something's Missing

On Monday night we tuned into a Zoom of the megillah reading from Beth Shalom in Pittsburgh. The service was well done and the megillah reading itself was clear and was read slowly enough that we could easily follow along and read every word ourselves. And yet, something was missing.

And so, on Tuesday we went to the local Chabad for their megillah reading. The Rabbi read the megillah very rapidly, it was hard to follow along, and, in Chabad tradition, we only shook our groggars on some mentions of Haman's name, but not all (I still don't get why Chabad does not boo and carry on every time Haman's name is said.)

There was definitely something to be said for the Zoom reading at Beth Shalom, and yet something was lacking. At Chabad, there was a certain energy that can only be found when attending shul in person.

Being in Florida from October through mid-April, I attend our services at the Carnegie Shul using Zoom. It is good. I am attending services at my favorite shul. But

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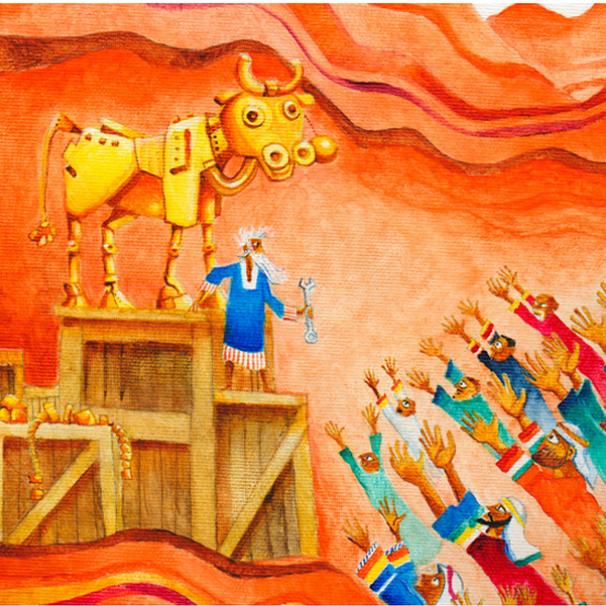
still, something is lacking. There is a certain energy that is missing. I will get to experience that energy when I return to in-person services in April.

Zoom has been a great means for us to achieve minyans in the age of Covid. But it is not the same. If you are able to return to in-shul services, please do so. Your presence and your energy in the sanctuary will be most welcomed.

Ki Tisa in a Nutshell

Exodus 30:11–34:35

From Chabad.org



The name of the Parshah, “Ki Tisa,” means “When you take” and it is found in Exodus 30:11.

The people of Israel are told to each contribute exactly half a shekel of silver to the Sanctuary. Instructions are also given regarding the making of the Sanctuary’s water basin, anointing oil and incense. “Wise-hearted” artisans Betzalel and Aholiav are placed in charge of the Sanctuary’s construction, and the people are once again commanded to keep the Shabbat.

When Moses does not return when expected from Mount Sinai, the people make a golden calf and worship it. G-d proposes to destroy the errant nation, but Moses intercedes on their behalf. Moses descends from the mountain carrying the tablets of the testimony engraved

with the Ten Commandments; seeing the people dancing about their idol, he breaks the tablets, destroys the golden calf, and has the primary culprits put to death. He then returns to G-d to say: “If You do not forgive them, blot me out from the book that You have written.”

G-d forgives, but says that the effect of their sin will be felt for many generations. At first G-d proposes to send His angel along with them, but Moses insists that G-d Himself accompany His people to the promised land.

Moses prepares a new set of tablets and once more ascends the mountain, where G-d reinscribes the covenant on these second tablets. On the mountain, Moses is also granted a vision of the divine thirteen attributes of mercy. So radiant is Moses’ face upon his return, that he must cover it with a veil, which he removes only to speak with G-d and to teach His laws to the people.

Haftorah in a Nutshell

I Kings 18:20-39

In this week's haftorah, Elijah the Prophet demonstrates the worthlessness of the Baal, just as Moses chastised the Israelites for serving the Golden Calf, as discussed in this week's Torah reading.

The background of this week's haftorah: King Ahab and Queen Jezebel ruled the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and encouraged the worship of the Baal deity as well as other forms of idolatry. To prove that G-d alone is in control and provides sustenance, Elijah decreed a drought on the kingdom—no rain fell for three years. When Ahab then accused Elijah of causing hardship for the Israelites, Elijah challenged him to a showdown. He, Elijah, would represent the cause of monotheism, and 850 idolatrous “prophets” would represent their cause. Ahab accepted.

The haftorah begins with Elijah, the Baal prophets, and many spectators gathering atop Mount Carmel. Elijah rebuked the people of Israel, uttering the famous words: “How long will you hop between two ideas? If the L-rd is G-d, go after Him, and if the Baal, go after him.”

Elijah then stated his challenge: “Give us two bulls and let them [the Baal prophets] choose one bull for themselves and cut it up and place it on the wood, but fire they shall not put; and I will prepare one bull, and I will put it on the wood, and fire will I not place. And you will call in the name of your deity, and I will call in the name of the L-rd, and it will be the G-d that will answer with fire, he is G-d.”

The people agreed to the challenge, and the prophets of the Baal were first. The prophets' entreaties to their god went unanswered. Elijah taunted them: “Call with a loud voice, for you presume that he is a god. [Perhaps] he is talking or he is pursuing [enemies], or maybe he is on a journey; perhaps he is sleeping and will awaken...”

As evening approached, Elijah took center-stage. He built an altar, laid his offering upon it and surrounded it with water. “Lord, the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Israel,” he declared. “Today let it be known that You are G-d in Israel and that I am Your servant, and at Your word have I done all these things. Answer me, O L-rd, answer me, and this people shall know that You are the L-rd G-d...”

A fire immediately descended from heaven and consumed the offering, as well as the altar and the surrounding water. “And all the people saw and fell on their faces, and they said, “The Lord is G-d, the L-rd is G-d.”



Haftorah Commentary

This haftorah commentary, excerpted from chabad.org, was written by Yitzi Hurwitz. It does an excellent job connecting the haftorah to this week's parshah and the sin of the golden calf.

On the Haftarah: Taking a Stand for Truth The Connection and the Lessons

Parshat Ki Sisa tells of the sin of the golden calf and the forgiveness the Jewish people received from G-d (through the 13 Attributes of Mercy and the giving of the half shekel).

The Haftarah also tells of a sinning people that return to G-d.

Also, in the parshah, the Jewish people sinned with a calf (a young bull). And in the Haftarah, it was through two bulls that they were put back on the right path.

There are many lessons to be learned from this Haftarah. I will touch on a few.

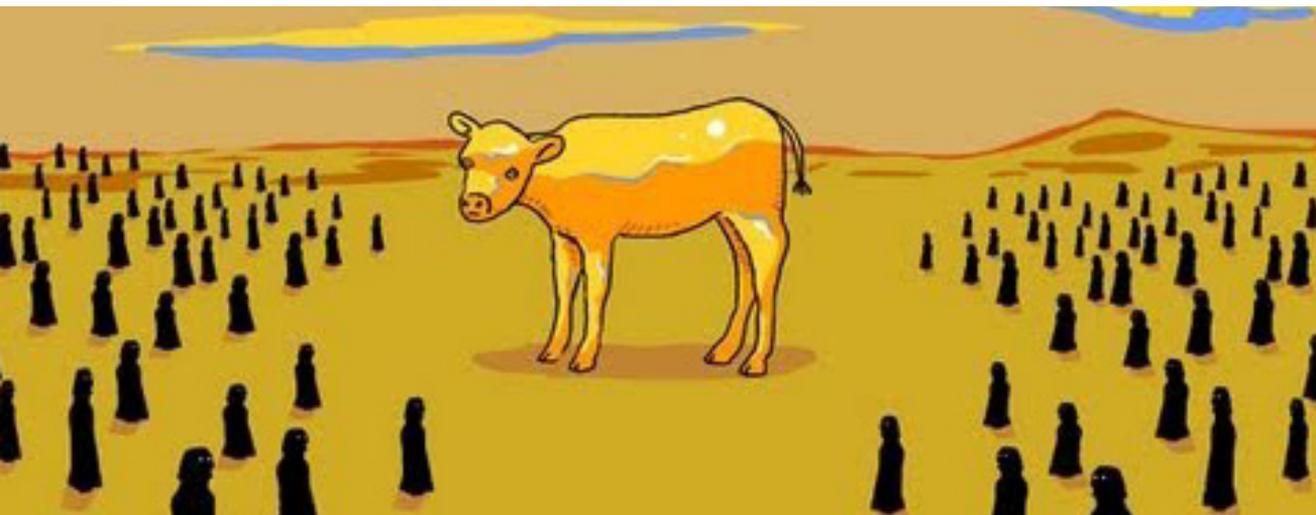
Elijah asked the people, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If G-d is G-d, then follow Him. And if it is Ba'al, then follow him."

From his word it seems as if he almost wished they would serve Baal rather than waver between the two. Isn't idol worship one of the worst things a Jew can do? Yes, but in a sense, wavering between two paths is even worse, as will be explained.

How does it happen that Jews, "believers, the children of believers," could serve idols?

The Rambam explains that it was because the flow of Divine energy comes through the stars and constellations. People therefore began to honor the celestial bodies, hoping to get something from them. But this was silly, like asking a hammer to drive in a nail. It is not the hammer, but the person holding it, who has the power to make that decision.

They were yearning for something and mistakenly thought that the celestial bodies could give it to them. They had no meaningful connection to the celestial bodies. They just wanted



to get something from them. It is like someone who becomes your friend because he wants something from you, without a real base to the relationship.

This is the essence of idol worship, serving for a possible gain.

This is also how it was possible that the Jews were tempted into idol worship, not that they had any meaningful connection to it, but they saw it as a means for a personal gain.

In response, Elijah asked the people of Israel, “How long will you waver between two opinions?”

There are, in fact, two kinds of wavering. First, there is the person who is simply not sure. He is in doubt as to whom to serve, so he serves both.

The second is the person who really doesn't care whom he serves; he just wants the gain, and he will serve whoever he thinks will give him that.

There are three ways that wavering is worse than idol worship.

- ◆ First, it is much more difficult to repent and return to G-d. Since he still serves G-d, he doesn't not feel the same urgent need to repent. In contrast, someone who just serves idols, when he recognizes that G-d is the only true G-d, he will immediately realize his mistake, and repent with all of his heart.
- ◆ Second, when someone believes in and serves idols, although he is committing a grave sin, at least, he has a general belief in spirituality, and a desire to do the right thing. So, when he finds out that G-d is the only true G-d, he will drop what is false and immediately embrace what is true. In contrast, the one who lacks spiritual conviction is usually cold to the whole idea altogether. It is very hard for a person who thinks this way to find his way to G-d.
- ◆ The third problem is the negative effect his beliefs and actions have on others. Someone who wants to follow the Torah will not learn from someone who is an overt idol worshipper. But the waiverer has a facade of someone who follows the Torah. Others may learn from him and be lead astray.

Idol Worship Today

Even though idol worship is not an issue today, there are those who worship money, honor, power, or fame. All for personal gain, it is the same as idol worship.

Wavering in this case means acting according to Torah most of the time but occasionally dropping observance when convenient. And this is harmful because of the same three reasons mentioned above.

Even the waverer could repent and come close to G d, but it takes intense repentance, a sincere search for the truth, and an embrace of extreme clarity—like the Children of Israel on Mount Carmel who proclaimed, “G-d is G-d! G-d is G-d!”

The Belligerent Bull

The Midrash tells us that the bull that was to be offered to Baal didn't want to go. He said to Elijah, “I and my friend came out of one belly... he will go up to the portion of G-d, and the Divine name will be sanctified through him, and I will go up to the portion of Baal, to anger my creator.”

Elijah responded to the bull: “Just as the name of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, will be sanctified through this one that is with me, so will it be sanctified through you.”

From Elijah’s words, it seems that the sanctification of G-d’s name of both bulls are equal. But the one that Elijah brought up for G-d was part of an open miracle, that everyone saw how a fire of G-d consumed it. This miracle showed them the truth of G-d. On the other hand, the bull that was brought for Baal merely showed that Baal was false. How can they be equal?

The answer is that through what Elijah did on Mount Carmel, the oneness of G-d was revealed, as they all proclaimed, “G-d is G-d! G-d is G-d!”

And when the oneness of G-d is revealed, the true G-dly purpose of everything shines through. This means that everything in the world has a G-dly purpose, even the things that we perceive as negative or bad. And when you begin to understand that it is all from G-d, you realize that underneath the facade of bad lies G-d’s will and purpose. You recognize the good hidden in everything.

Here, the essential oneness of G-d was brought out through the bull that was brought for Baal. And this revelation is equal everywhere, so both bulls equally sanctified the name of G-d.

This is a lesson to us. Some may think: “I only want to deal with the bull for G-d, only with the people who clearly serve G-d, but I don’t want to have anything to do with the bull for Baal, those who don’t serve G-d.” And in truth, the oneness of G-d is in them as well, and if you invest your time and heart into that person who may be far from the Torah path, even though it takes you away from your own growth in Torah, you will uncover the oneness of G-d in that person, and he will return to G-d. When that happens, all that you perceived as negative in that person become meritorious. Because, when someone does repentance, his transgressions turn to merits.

This work, investing time and effort into someone who is far from Torah, is very important and should come before your own growth. As we read, that first the bull for Baal was offered and only after, the bull for G-d.

May we strengthen our resolve in our service to G-d, and recognize His true oneness. And through our work with others, we will help them to also recognize the oneness of G-d. This will surely bring us to hear Elijah herald the coming of Moshiach, when all will proclaim, “G-d is G-d! G-d is G-d!” May it happen soon.

Yahrtzeits

This week the Carnegie Shul acknowledges the yahrtzeits of:

Mitchell Jay Lederstein

Clara Cohen

Katie Ruth Oskie

Lillian Hellman

Jennie Miriam Zionts

Don Herman Perlman

Rose Drill Klein

Goldie Dorn

Simon (Si) Perlman

May their memories be for a blessing.

Spotlight On: The Female Soldier:
Elaine H. Berkowitz, DMD
March 9, 2023, 7 PM
Free Virtual Event



Dr. Elaine Berkowitz, a member of the Carnegie Shul, received her Doctor of Dental Medicine from the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine. She retired from the Army Reserves as a Lieutenant Colonel with 38 years of service, and she deployed 4 times and has accumulated numerous medals and awards. Dr. Berkowitz is a member of various military and dental organizations. She is active in the Reserve Officers Association, the Military Order of World Wars, The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Jewish War Veterans, Women Army Corp Veterans Association, Women's Overseas Service League as well as the American Dental Association and Special Advocates in Dentistry, to name a few. She received a Doctor Honoris Causa from the University of Prizren, Kosovo. This prestigious award was previously given to Bill Clinton and Tony Blair. Dr. Berkowitz has published her autobiography, "Live Life...Love Country."

Tune in here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V73yieA0qnE>

WESTERN PA SMALL CONGREGATION 2022-2023 PROGRAMMING

with assistance from the Jewish Community Legacy Project

**Coming
Next Week**

To Attend:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0kdu6vrjgvEtertWXb2tlqwJK-pJbdylyX>

B'NAI B'RITH IN WESTERN PA

Presented by: Eric Lidji, Director

Rauh Jewish History Programs & Archives

Thursday, March 16, 2023

at 7:00 pm

The International Order of B'nai B'rith was one of the most important Jewish organizations in the world for much of the 19th and 20th centuries, but it was especially important for small towns in Western Pennsylvania. B'nai B'rith promoted unity within small towns Jewish communities. It also helped these isolated Jewish communities connect to the larger Jewish world. B'nai B'rith started at least 92 lodges throughout Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia, plus dozens of B'nai B'rith Women chapters and BBYO chapters. We'll look at the history of B'nai B'rith in Western Pennsylvania using photographs and documents from numerous small towns throughout the region.



Eric Lidji is the director of the Rauh Jewish Archives at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh, Pa. He curates its website "The Jewish Encyclopedia of Western Pennsylvania" and hosts its local history podcast "The Cornerstone." He is the author of many books and articles on the Jewish history of Western Pennsylvania.