



# Carnegie Shul Chatter

October 5, 2023



Light candles 6:36pm

Shabbat Services 9:30am

## Services This Week

This Shabbos we return to our regular hybrid services, with services in the sanctuary that will also be streamed on line. This Shabbos is also the holiday of **Shemini Atzeres** and **Yizkor** will be a part of the service.

Immediately following Shemini Atzerat, beginning at sundown Saturday evening, is the holiday of **Simchas Torah**, perhaps the most joyous holiday of the Jewish year. We will not have services in our shul but, as was the case with Sukkos, you might want to enjoy the holiday at another shul.

## The Torah is Ours

Simchas Torah has always been my favorite holiday. As My Jewish Learning tells us, "Simchat Torah conveys a clear message about the centrality of Torah in Jewish life. It is both a source of Jewish identity and a precious gift from God. Simchat Torah is the day on which the whole community gathers to come into direct contact with the Torah and to express our joy in having received it."

As a child I loved Simchas Torah because it was neat to watch the parading of the Torahs and because the shul gave the kids a Hershey's bar and a red delicious apple to eat. I still like Hershey's bars and red delicious apples, but I love the more meaningful gift, God's gift of the Torah to the Jewish people.

I also love the continuum of finishing our annual reading of the Torah then starting right back in again with the reading of the Book of Genesis and the amazing story of creation.

Celebrate! Enjoy! The Torah is ours!

# Shemini Atzeret Torah Reading in a Nutshell

From Chabad.org

**Deuteronomy 14:22-16:17; Numbers 29:35**



A tenth of all produce is to be eaten in Jerusalem, or else exchanged for money with which food is purchased and eaten there. On certain years this tithe is given to the poor instead. Firstborn cattle and sheep are to be offered in the Temple and their meat eaten by the Kohen (priest).

The mitzvah of charity obligates a Jew to aid a needy fellow with a gift or loan. On the Sabbatical year (occurring every seventh year) all loans are to be forgiven. All indentured servants are to be set free after six years of service.

The portion then mentions the laws of the three pilgrimage festivals — Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot — when all should go to “see and be seen” before G-d in the Holy Temple.

G-d declares that the eighth day will be the festival of Shemini Atzeret, one bullock is offered, together with a ram and seven lambs. With each of the animals is brought the prescribed meal, wine and oil supplements: three tenths of an ephah of fine flour, and half a hin each of wine and oil, per bullock; two tenths of an ephah of flour and a third of a hin of each of the liquids for each ram; and one tenth and one quarter respectively for each lamb.

## Shemini Atzeret Haftorah in a Nutshell

**I Kings 8:54-66.**

The setting for the haftorah for the holiday of Shemini Atzeret is the dedication of the first Holy Temple by King Solomon. The dedication was a seven-day festive affair, which was immediately followed by the seven festive days of the holiday of Sukkot. And then, as we read in this haftorah, on the “eighth day” (i.e., Shemini Atzeret), Solomon sent the people off to their homes.

The reading opens immediately after King Solomon concludes a lengthy public prayer to G-d. He then blesses the assembled Jewish people and encourages them to follow G-d’s will and

observe the commandments—it is this blessing that occupies the bulk of the reading.

The King then inaugurates the Holy Temple by bringing various offerings: peace offerings, burnt offerings, and meal and fat offerings. And then, “on the eighth day he dismissed the people, and they blessed the King and went to their homes, rejoicing and delighted of heart for all the goodness that G-d had wrought for David His servant and for Israel His people.”



## Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah 101

The two holidays at the conclusion of Sukkot.

*By My Jewish Learning*

Coming at the conclusion of Sukkot are the two holidays of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. In Israel and among liberal Jews they are combined into one holiday on the day after the conclusion of Sukkot.

Among more traditional Jews outside of Israel, they are observed separately from one another on two consecutive days. Shemini Atzeret means the “Eighth Day of Assembly,” while Simchat Torah means “Rejoicing in Torah.”

### Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah History

Shemini Atzeret is mentioned in the Bible, but its exact function is unclear. In Second Temple times, it appears to have been a day devoted to the ritual cleansing of the altar in the Temple. With the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, this function of the day became obsolete. Although it marks the beginning of the rainy season in Israel and, therefore includes the year’s first prayer for rain, its lack of clear definition may have provided the impetus to celebrate it in conjunction with Simchat Torah, a celebration of the conclusion of one and the beginning of another annual cycle of readings from the Torah. This latter holiday probably originated during the medieval period.



### Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah At Home

Unlike many other holidays, the observance of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are centered in the synagogue and community. On Shemini Atzeret, some still eat in the sukkah (the traditional hut associated with the festival of Sukkot), but in contrast to Sukkot no blessings are associated with that activity.

## Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah in the Community

Beginning on Shemini Atzeret and lasting until Pesach (Passover), a short prayer for rain is inserted into the second blessing of the Amidah Prayer. It is traditional to include the Yizkor, or memorial service, as part of the liturgy for this day. Simchat Torah is characterized by joyful dancing with the Torah. The final portion of the Book of Deuteronomy is read in the synagogue followed by the beginning of the Book of Genesis. In this manner, the annual cycle of Torah readings continues unbroken.

## Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah Theology and Themes

While Shemini Atzeret's significance is somewhat unclear, Simchat Torah conveys a clear message about the centrality of Torah in Jewish life. It is both a source of Jewish identity and a precious gift from God. Simchat Torah is the day on which the whole community gathers to come into direct contact with the Torah and to express our joy in having received it.



## Yahrzeits

This week the Carnegie Shul acknowledges the yahrzeits of:

**Erich B. Wechsler**

**Freda Weiss**

**Sadie Ash**

**Miriam Sax**

May their memories be for a blessing.

## Donations

The Carnegie Shul is most grateful for the following recent High Holiday donations:

**Perry Bergman**

**Mildred Bodell**

**Robert Bodell**

**Ethal Joyce Flam**

**Heather Gilmer**

**Gerrie Ketler**

**Barry Myers**

**Irwin Norvitch**

**Adam Rothaus**

# The Struggle for Israel's Future

Tuesday, October 17, 2023

7:00 pm

The dramatic events that have unfolded in Israel during 2023 have reverberated around the Jewish world. In this session, Rabbi Schiff will analyze what has happened over the last few months, and what this might portend for the future of the Jewish state.



**Rabbi Dr. Danny Schiff** is the Gefsky Community Scholar at the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh. He is a noted teacher and researcher in Jewish ethics. Rabbi Schiff previously served as the Community Scholar for the Agency for Jewish Learning in Pittsburgh, as rabbi of B'nai Israel in White Oak, Pennsylvania, and as rabbi at Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne. He is the author of *Abortion in Judaism*, published by Cambridge University Press and a forthcoming book on the future of non-Orthodox Judaism. He is a former Board member of the City of Pittsburgh Ethics Board and the Society of Jewish Ethics.



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