

# Tefilla Notebook

24 Shevat • Yitro • Birkat HaChodesh

February 2-3, 2024

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Dearest Members & Friends,

I have just returned from my latest trip to Israel – the third since October 7th. This time, I was accompanied by members of our Beverly Hills community. Our time together was intense, exhilarating, and deeply moving.

Israel is currently facing a war on eight separate fronts – each of which was explained to our group in vivid detail by

Israel's National Security Advisor, Tzachi Hanegbi. But despite the grave threats from multiple directions, Israeli citizens stand tall and proud, resilient in the face of every challenge, and totally resolute as they confront a bleak present and a potentially bleaker future.

During our 3-day mission, we met with dozens of heroes from all walks of life and every segment of Israeli society: military personnel, hospital staff, social workers, religious leaders, opinion formers, and of course – ordinary folk, young and old. All of them were impressive in their own way, acutely aware of the dangers they face and fully conscious of the fact that Israel has no option but rise to the moment, and to face down whatever is thrown their way.

But one hero we met stood out as extraordinary by every possible criterion and definition. His name is Oz Davidian. We met Oz on the first day of the mission, having just visited the site of the fierce firefight between Israelis and Hamas terrorists at Kerem Shalom, on the border between Israel, Gaza and Egypt. From there we traveled to the site of the Nova rave music festival, near kibbutz Re'im on Route 232, which runs alongside the Gaza border.

Rain gushed down as I intoned the prayer for the hostages still in Gaza and recited kaddish for the October 7th martyrs in a field full of flags, each with the name and photo of a martyr who was murdered in that spot on that fateful day. Directly in front of us was a large board with the photos of young partygoers kidnapped that morning, some of whom have since been confirmed as dead.

We clambered back onto the bus as the rain lashed down all around us, and the sky darkened to match our somber mood. Oz joined us on the bus and began telling his incredible story. An unprepossessing man in his early 50s, Oz is a weather-beaten farmer from the village of Maslul, very close to Re'im. That dreadful morning, after an unprecedented barrage of rocket attacks from Gaza, Oz secured his family in the safe room at their farmhouse and instinctively drove towards the site of the festival. What he encountered was utter carnage. Bodies littered the roads and fields, and cars burnt with people still inside them.

Armed with nothing but determination, Oz decided to do everything he could to rescue surviving ravers from certain death. With terrorist guns firing all around him, and grenades exploding close by, he weaved his way between abandoned cars and

bumped along muddy fields searching for survivors. As soon as his pickup truck was full, he raced along dips in the fields, using local knowledge to help him chart a path to safety so that those he had rescued would live.

At one point he mistook a pair of terrorists for Israeli paramedics and stopped to talk to them. But as soon as they began speaking, he realized they were Hamas gunmen. He sped away as they sprayed his car with bullets, and he miraculously escaped unharmed. Time and again, Oz returned to the Nova site, relying on cellphone numbers provided by the survivors he had rescued to find other survivors. He used WhatsApp to get the precise locations of their friends, who were frantically hiding from the terrorists determined to find them and kill them.

As the hours unfolded, Oz made 20 trips to and from the festival site, each time ferrying another group of terrified festivalgoers to the safety of nearby communities. His pickup truck became a tool of salvation during those desperate hours, as he navigated through the perilous conditions that saw hundreds of others getting killed. His heroic efforts, under the constant shadow of violent death, resulted in 120 young people being saved from the evil fate that had befallen so many others.

"There were other people who also came to rescue survivors," Oz told us. "I saw them. But they came once, rescued a couple of people, and then never came back. I don't know why. I just kept on coming back until I no longer saw any signs of life. That's what I did. I don't know why those other people never came back."

I was Oz's translator as he told his story, and as I translated those particular words, I couldn't help thinking to myself – but of course they never came back! Because coming back would have been crazy! They were lucky enough to escape with their lives once. Why would they come back once they knew they would almost certainly die? Oz was crazy, and most people are not crazy like Oz.

Those were my thoughts in that moment, as I listened to Oz tell his story. But later on, as I reflected on what he'd said – I changed my mind. What Oz did, I realized, is actually a microcosm of what the Jewish people have done for millennia. Because, if you think about it – the Jewish people are utterly crazy. People try to kill us – but instead of running away, we keep on coming back. The Jewish nation is just like Oz Davidian, but on steroids.

We are the Whac-A-Mole nation. They knock us down, and we just pop back up. No amount of persecution, no amount of hatred, and no amount of danger can ever make us give up on who we are and what we do as a people. We keep on coming back, blind to the bodies and the mayhem, and amidst all the chaos that litters our history. All we can see to the exclusion of anything else – just like Oz did on October 7th – is the duty we have to our identity and to our destiny.

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## FRIDAY, FEB 2nd

5:06 PM CANDLELIGHTING  
5:10 PM KABBALAT SHABBAT

## SATURDAY, JAN 27th

8:15 AM GEMARA SHIUR  
9:00 AM SHACHARIT  
5:10 PM MINCHA  
6:00 PM MAARIV  
6:05 PM SHABBAT ENDS

## WEEKDAY DAVENING

Sun	8:00am	5:10pm
Mon-Thur	7:00am	5:10pm
Fri	7:00am	5:15pm

**BRING THEM  
HOME NOW**

## THANK YOU

**Elliott and Ruth Kahn** for sponsoring Seudah Shlishit in memory of Elliott's grandfather, **Eliyahu ben Yakov z"l**, whose yahrtzeit is on the 30th of Shevat.

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Synagogues around the world are currently reading the Torah portions recalling the Exodus from Egypt, and the lead-up to the revelation at Sinai. In the course of the narrative, we hear that immediately after escaping the murderous intentions of the mighty Egyptian army, a fierce warrior nation called Amalek attacked the Jewish nation. Amalek wanted to wipe out the Jews and finish off the job that the Egyptians had started. And although the Jews prevailed over Amalek, they could easily have said: if this is what redemption means, who needs it? First the Egyptians tried to wipe us out, and then Amalek. Who's next? But instead, they rallied together, and with one voice proclaimed at the foot of Mount Sinai: "Naaseh VeNishma!" – "We shall do, and we shall listen!" No matter what challenges we encounter, we will never give up on who we are, and our commitment is and will always remain unyielding – notwithstanding any attempt to knock us down.

At the end of Parshat Beshalach, God issued a command to the Jewish nation. He instructed us to never forget what Amalek tried to do, and to erase their memory forever. This directive seems puzzling. After all, Amalek vanished as a nation relatively soon after these events. How do we obliterate a nation that has already disappeared? Meeting and hearing from Oz Davidian provided me with a profound answer. Indeed, Oz himself personifies that answer.

It's ingrained in our Jewish DNA. We overcome the likes of Amalek not by force, but by our unwavering spirit. We defy those who seek our destruction by our relentless resilience. We return, again and again, defying time and adversaries. And long after Amalek and groups like Hamas fade into oblivion, the Jewish nation will still stand. We will remain strong, resilient, and ever-ready to face the next challenge.

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom and a great week ahead,  
Rabbi Pini Dunner

## Thank you to our Israel mission sponsors

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## Yahrtzeits

**Raquel Monlack Sochaczewski**

Rachel bat Shlomo a"h

Mother of

**Jaime Sohacheski**

Yahrtzeit - 25 Shevat

**Shirlee Katz**

Sheindel bat Shlomo a"h

Mother of

**Susan Baum**

Yahrtzeit - 27 Shevat

**Rose B. Raphael a"h**

Mother of

**Gina Raphael**

Yahrtzeit - 25 Shevat

**Brian S. Joseph**

Shimon ben Meir Yonatan z"l

Father of

**Emma Almond**

Yahrtzeit -30 Shevat

**Sarah Finkel**

Sarah bat Shmuel a"h

Mother of

**Harry Finkel**

Yahrtzeit - 26 Shevat

**Irving Weiner**

Yehoshua ben David Baer z"l

Father of

**Michael Weiner**

Yahrtzeit - 30 Shevat

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Debby Fenner

Stuart Tanenbaum

Susan Baum

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Franck Ruimy

Natalie Wizman

Kele Kirschenbaum

Evan Richter



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please send a  
message to the Rabbi  
on WhatsApp at  
310-499-3407

**Richard Laks**

Yerachmiel ben Avraham z"l

Father of

**Hillel Laks**

Yahrtzeit - 30 Shevat

Next week's parsha shiur is  
sponsored by **Ruth Brandt**  
in memory of her mother,  
**Judith Brandt-Goldsher,**  
**Irika bat Baruch a"h,**  
whose yahrtzeit is on the  
20th of Shevat



# YINBH Solidarity Mission

Thank you to everyone who joined us on this important trip to Israel. And thank you to our mission sponsors





# Yinbh Mikvah



## HOURS

The Mikvah is open every evening including Shabbat, Yom Tov and Motzei Shabbat.

Kallah appointments also available.

All appointments must be made in advance.

## TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

[www.yinbh.org/mikvah](http://www.yinbh.org/mikvah) or Download the MikvahCloud app



## OUR LOCATION

9261 Alden Drive  
Beverly Hills

## CONTACT US

310-299-1792 (Text Only)  
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