



Tefilla Notebook

27 Adar II • Shemini • Birkat HaChodesh • Shabbat Hachodesh

April 5-6, 2024

Steven Dorfman, President • Rabbi Pini Dunner, Senior Rabbi • Rabbi Aryeh Perlstein, Assistant Rabbi



Dearest Members & Friends,

This week I met one of my great heroes. What was even nicer is that this great hero did not turn out to be a disappointment. On the contrary, after meeting him I am more convinced than ever of what a great hero he is. I am talking about Hillel Neuer.

Hillel Neuer is a Canadian-born international lawyer and human rights activist, best known for his role as the Executive Director of UN Watch, a human rights NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland. UN Watch, as its name suggests, focuses on monitoring the performance of the United Nations using the yardstick of its own Charter. UN Watch also advocates for genuine human rights and equality, particularly in contexts where these ideals are threatened by rogue agencies or individuals within the UN, who have a political or ideological agenda that conflicts with the original aspirations of the United Nations.

Over the years, Neuer has been a vocal critic of various UN bodies, including the Human Rights Council, for their failure to effectively address or even acknowledge human rights abuses around the world, even as they obsessively focus their attention on Israel to the exclusion of countless other pressing global human rights issues. Neuer argues that this preoccupation with Israel undermines the UN's credibility and compromises its mission to uphold human rights around the world.

As Neuer has proven time and again, UN officials, such as Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), and Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, are emblematic of this endemic and blatant bias. Albanese is particularly egregious. In 2022, she controversially suggested that America is controlled "by the Jewish lobby." And a few weeks ago, she contested French President Emmanuel Macron's description of the October 7th Hamas massacre as the "largest antisemitic massacre of our century." In Albanese's opinion, the Hamas-perpetrated pogrom was a legitimate response to "Israel's oppression" and had nothing to do with the fact that the victims were Jewish.

According to Neuer, the UN stance vis-à-vis Israel not only diverts attention from widespread human rights violations in other countries but also detracts from the UN's ability to serve as an impartial arbiter of international human rights standards. Neuer is known for his fearless speeches and presentations at UN meetings, where he frequently calls out member states and UN bodies for their hypocrisy or for their failure to live up to the UN's self-proclaimed standards.

In a 2016 interview, Neuer noted that in that year the World Health Organization had condemned just one country for violating people's health rights: Israel – over its "treatment" of Syrians in the Golan Heights. Neuer called this anti-Israel bias "Orwellian, paradoxical, and absurd." As he pointed out, "Israel should be singled out – but for their incredible medical treatment of refugees from Syria's war." Truthfully, George Orwell's "1984" offers a powerful analogy for the UN's absurd emphasis on Israel while ignoring rogue states that continue their misconduct unchecked. In the topsy-turvy UN world, where truth is manipulated and the narrative controlled, Neuer's work at UN Watch echoes the efforts of Winston Smith against the omnipotent Party. Smith sought to uncover and preserve truth in a society dominated by doublethink and subversive revisionism; Neuer endeavors to hold the

UN accountable, challenging its prejudiced and inaccurate narratives, and calling for a return to its foundational principles of impartiality and universal human rights.

In Orwell's dystopian Oceania, reality is whatever the Party deems it to be, and dissenting voices are systematically silenced. The UN, through its various bodies, has become a real-life version of Oceania. Its official view of Israel is negative, and that's all that matters. Meanwhile no other country is subjected to anything close to the disapproval Israel is forced to suffer. UN bodies and UN resolutions are riddled with anti-Israel bias, and the inevitable result is that the UN's humanitarian and ethical compass have been irreparably skewed. Orwell's protagonist in "1984" ultimately pays a heavy price for his defiance. But Neuer is undeterred, despite facing formidable opposition in his quest to ensure that the UN remains true to its charter and its commitment to human rights for all, free from any political or ideological bias.

Considering the uphill struggle he faces, and the seemingly endless disappointments, Neuer is remarkably cheerful and ebullient. This week, he addressed a packed event in Los Angeles. His detailed presentation followed an enthusiastic introduction by comedian Elon Gold. You'd think that after so many years of battling wolves presenting themselves as sheep, that Neuer would be disheartened and downbeat. But he isn't – he is buoyant and battle-ready for the next fight. And no matter how overwhelming the challenge, Neuer sees his role as crucial for the survival of democracy and humanity. Even if he is unable to effect meaningful change, he is the voice of record – a voice that will continue to reverberate down the years. No one will ever be able to say in years to come: "We didn't know!" They knew – because Hillel Neuer told them, not once, but countless times and in countless ways.

In Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's commentary on Parshat Shemini, he delves into the tragic episode of Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aaron the High Priest who were punished for offering "strange fire" before God. Rav Hirsch interprets the fate of Nadav and Avihu as a profound admonition about the sanctity of adhering strictly to doing what is right, particularly for those in positions of leadership and service. He posits that every action, particularly for those in the service of the community at large, must be approached with honesty, integrity, and a deep commitment to the principles they purport and are expected to uphold.

This message resonates precisely with the ethos behind Hillel Neuer's superlative advocacy work. Neuer's dedication to truth and justice, challenging bias and dishonesty at the United Nations, mirrors this integral Jewish imperative to uphold truth and righteousness. Rav Hirsch emphasizes how critical it is to adhere to ethical standards, and notes the consequences of deviating from divinely ordained paths, underscoring the importance of Neuer's mission. Just as Nadav and Avihu's story serves as a caution against the perils of overstepping bounds without proper authority or intent, the UN needs to be conscious of the path it continues to travel, and the ultimate result of deviating from its original lofty and worthy goals. In the meantime, Hillel Neuer, the great hero, will continue to chart the UN's voyage into the dark abyss – although, hopefully, his relentless advocacy can avert that tragedy from happening.

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

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, APRIL 5th

6:59PM CANDLELIGHTING
6:30 PM KABBALAT SHABBAT

SATURDAY, APRIL 6TH

8:30 AM GEMARA SHIUR
9:15 AM SHACHARIT
6:40 PM PIRKEI AVOT SHIUR
7:05 PM MINCHA
7:55 PM MAARIV
7:57 PM SHABBAT ENDS

WEEKDAY DAVENING

| | | |
|-----------|--------|--------|
| Sun | 8:00am | 7:05pm |
| Mon-Thurs | 7:00am | 7:05pm |
| Fri | 7:00am | 6:30pm |

Rosh Chodesh is on Tuesday

BRING THEM HOME NOW

PESACH IS COMING

First night seder - earlybird rate expires Monday

Chametz Sale Forms are available in the lobby or at yinh.org/chametz

Limited quantities of Shmura Matzah are available for purchase for \$40lb

Full schedule and more at yinh.org/passover

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Uriel Sadeghi Diba Mostadim
 Micah Sostchen Sharon Weiner
 Marlene Perl Mark Zucker
 Netanel Sadeghi Grace Zucker
 Jacques Wizman

THANK YOU

Thank you to **Cecile and Ed Gromis** for sponsoring next week's Parsha shiur in memory of Cecile's father, **Irving Silberspitz, Yitzchak ben Avraham Aba z"l**, whose yahrtzeit is on the 5th of Nissan.

SHMURA MATZA FOR SALE

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יזכור

Sunday April 28th, 2024
 11:00am PST via zoom

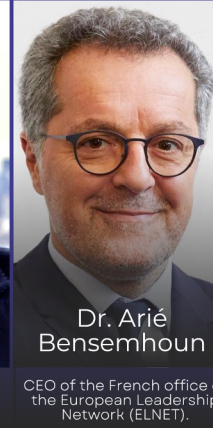
Zoom Code: 310 276 7650
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JOIN US TO WELCOME OUR
GUEST SPEAKERS FROM ELNET
 THIS SHABBAT



Éric Danon

Speaker
 Former French Ambassador to Israel



Dr. Arié Bensemhoun

CEO of the French office of the European Leadership Network (ELNET).



David Siegel

President of Friends of ELNET

Éric Danon will be speaking during services. Éric is a Former French Ambassador to Israel, Knight of the French Légion d'Honneur and the Ordre National du Mérite. Ambassador Danon was the first-ever Jewish citizen of France, appointed French Ambassador to Israel.

Our three guests will be joining us for the Kiddush Luncheon

SERVICES WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A KIDDUSH LUNCHEON SPONSORED BY **MOSHE & HELEN SASSOVER AND TOM & JUDY FLESH**

FRIENDS OF ELNET

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SOLIDARITY TRIP TO ISRAEL

FRIDAY JUNE 21 - WEDNESDAY JUNE 26

Trip includes accommodations at the Inbal Hotel, airport transfers, transportation within Israel, security, site visits, support staff & all meals. PARTICIPANTS WILL ARRANGE THEIR OWN TRAVEL TO ISRAEL, & TRAVEL INSURANCE.

Cost: \$3100 per person with double occupancy • Single Supplement \$500

Contact Carly for sponsorship opportunities

SHABBAT HAGADOL DRASHA

Shabbat, April 20th

Drasha 6:10pm • Mincha 7:15pm

OPENING DOORS, POURING OUT WRATH

Elijah's Promise and
Our Quest for
Justice on Seder
Night



Rabbi Pini
Dunner

Rabbi Dunner takes us to the heart of a cherished Passover tradition: opening our doors for Elijah the Prophet towards the end of the Seder, as we solemnly declare 'Shefoch Chamatcha El Hagoyim Asher Lo Yeda'ucha' - 'Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You.' What is the origin of this strange custom? Why does Elijah the Prophet appear at our Seder? How does the harsh sentiments of 'Shefoch Chamatcha' fit in with the Seder night theme? Rabbi Dunner examines the origins and significance of inviting Elijah into our homes juxtaposed with the powerful plea to God to pour out His divine wrath upon oppressors, uncovering the layers of meaning behind these rituals and how they challenge us to reflect on what celebrating the Exodus from Egypt is all about.



First Night SEDER

Monday, April 22nd, 2024

SEDER LED BY
RABBI PINI DUNNER &
RABBI ARYEH PERLSTEIN

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