

Tefilla Notebook

This week's Tefilla Notebook is sponsored by **Steve & Vivian Dorfman** in memory of Vivian's father **Sam Weiss, Mordechai Simon ben Yitchok Yehuda z"l**, whose yahrtzeit is on the 9th of Tammuz.

12 Tammuz • Chukat-Balak

June 30-July 1, 2023

Steven Dorfman, President

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Dear Members and Friends,

Emmanuel-Auguste-Dieudonné, better known as Emmanuel, comte de Las Cases (1766-1842), was a French naval officer and the esteemed author of a bestselling atlas. But his most enduring legacy lies in his close association with Napoleon Bonaparte, as one of his trusted confidants. In 1823, de Las Cases published

"Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène," a remarkable record of his time with Napoleon between 1815 and 1816 on the remote island of St. Helena, where the former Emperor had been exiled by the British. This extraordinary work contains a comprehensive and intimate – if somewhat controversial – account of de Las Cases' extensive and frequent conversations with Napoleon over a period of eighteen months. Readers are immersed not only in the intricate details of Napoleon's life and illustrious career, as recalled by the former Emperor himself, but also in Napoleon's political philosophy and his poignant reflections on the human condition.

Napoleon Bonaparte's unquenchable thirst for knowledge and his profound appreciation of history resonated throughout his reign as the leader of France. Despite reveling in the present moment and in achieving resounding success in his military campaigns, politics, and diplomacy, he always remained acutely conscious of the ever-present specter of the tides of history. This consciousness reached its pinnacle during his exile on St. Helena, where his days as Emperor were irrevocably behind him. It was in his agonized conversations with de Las Cases that Napoleon's convictions regarding the relentless course of history became fully crystallized.

One of Napoleon's oft cited statements, which appeared in de Las Cases' book, reveals his profound understanding of the strategic reach of God and human goodness: "There are only two powers in the world: the sword and the spirit. By the spirit, I mean civil and religious institutions. And in the long run, the sword is always defeated by the spirit." This stunning declaration – stunning, principally because of who Napoleon was and what he represented – exemplifies his penetrating insight that there is an enduring power that transcends mere military might and physical strength, as symbolized by the sword. Ultimate power resides in the unwavering influence, resilience, and fortitude of ideas, religion, values, and the societal institutions encompassed by the spirit.

Napoleon's words reflect a deep recognition that while military conquests and triumphs may shape the present, it is the intangible forces of the human spirit, embodied in civil institutions and religious belief, that wield the true power to shape the course of history. Enduring faith in God and the unwavering pursuit of human dignity always prevail over the transient nature of brute force. Napoleon, despite his irrepressible tendency to prioritize might over what was right, held a profound understanding of this truth, even as he grappled with his own contradictions while atop France's power pyramid.

This powerful idea, and in particular, the potency of its source, might explain the anomaly of the opening prayer said each morning in every synagogue across the world – a verse that also often adorns the exterior of synagogue buildings or is displayed over the ark at the front of the sanctuary that is home to the Torah scrolls. The verse is taken from Parshat Balak, and records the words of the gentle prophet, Balaam, as he attempted, for the third time, to curse the Jewish nation from afar, but was instead forced to utter a series of remarkable statements regarding the incredible endurance of his oblivious interlocutors (Num. 24:5):

מה טובו אהליך יעקב משכנותיך ישראל – "How goodly are your tents Jacob, your

dwelling Israel."

The disturbing inclusion of this malicious character's words in our prayers is jarring enough, but to include them as the day's opening prayer seems positively obnoxious. Surely there are numerous verses from the psalms that are just as suitable, if not more so, to launch our devotions each day; why resort to using a statement uttered by an irredeemably degenerate miscreant, as Balaam is described in Talmudic and Midrashic sources.

Before delving into the solution to this intriguing puzzle, it is essential to explore the two primary explanations that reveal the meaning behind Balaam's statement. The first explanation, cited by Rashi, draws upon a passage from the Talmud found in Bava Batra 60a. Balaam's observation of the entrances and openings of the Israelite tents and dwellings revealed a deliberate lack of alignment, allowing for each family to maintain their personal privacy. This recognition led Balaam to declare, "These people are truly worthy of having the Divine Presence rest upon them." Despite Balaam's own morally compromised life, he was deeply moved by the dignified living conditions of the Jewish nation, even amidst their temporary dwelling structures in the harsh wilderness. His words of praise reflected an appreciation for their societal civility, which boded well for the nation's long-term survival, contrary to his intended curse.

The second explanation, proposed by Rabbi Obadiah Sforno (1475-1550), takes a different approach and focuses on Balaam's prophetic powers. Sforno associates "your tents" with Torah academies, likening them to tents and drawing upon the example of Jacob, who was described as a constant student of the word of God, dwelling in the metaphorical tents of learning. The significance of the term "tent" is also apparent in the Book of Exodus, where the "Tent of Testimony" symbolized the presence of God. Additionally, Sforno interprets "your dwellings" as synagogues, encompassing local places of worship and the ultimate synagogue, the Jerusalem Temple. Balaam's deliberate choice of these specific definitions highlights his understanding that the Jewish people were unassailable, despite attempts to annihilate them, due to the existence of Torah academies and synagogues, which serve as their enduring protection.

These two explanations shed a revealing light on Balaam's iconic words. The first explanation emphasizes the dignified living conditions and societal civility of the Jewish people, while the second explanation underscores the significance of God's omnipresence within the nation, which provided them with long-term protection and resilience. And so, millennia before Napoleon spoke of "the spirit" as meaning "civil and religious institutions" – a spirit that he understood would always endure despite efforts by brute power to extinguish it – Balaam got there first.

We include Balaam's words at the beginning of our daily prayers not in spite of his wicked intentions and debauched immorality, but deliberately because of it. Balaam's recognition of the enduring potential of the Jewish people underscores the power of faith, humanity, and the institutions that uphold them, specifically because of who he was. His insights echo throughout history, from the words of Napoleon Bonaparte recognizing the enduring power of the spirit over the sword, to the understanding of great warriors who grasped that military victories are ephemeral compared to the lasting influence of faith and humanity. And they serve as a reminder that true power lies not in the transitory realm of physical might, but in the enduring strength of God belief and the civil values that shape our societies.

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

FRIDAY, JUNE 30

7:50pm CANDLELIGHTING
6:30pm KABBALAT SHABBAT

SATURDAY, JULY 1

8:30 am GEMARA SHIUR
9:15 am SHACHARIT
7:35 pm PIRKEI AVOT SHIUR
8:00 pm MINCHA
8:50 pm MAARIV
8:53 pm SHABBAT ENDS

WEEKDAY DAVENING

Sun-Mo 8:00am 8:00pm
Tue-Wed 7:00am 8:00pm
**Thu 7:00am 8:00pm
Fri 7:00am 6:30pm
**Thursday - 17th of Tammuz
Fast Begins 4:17am Fast Ends 8:40pm

THANK YOU

Seudah Shlishit this week is sponsored by **David & Gloria Frankel** in memory of David's father **Naftali Tzvi Frankel, Naftali Tzvi ben Chaim Yaakov z"l** whose yahrtzeit is on the 17th Tammuz.

Let's Talk Sisterhood

with Gina Raphael & Maryjo Schnitzer

AUGUST

An evening of challah braiding with
inspiration for the
New Year 5784.

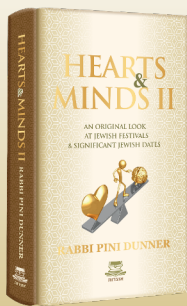
Thursday August 31st

Sign up at yinbh.org/challah

Watch Out for the upcoming book launch of
Hearts and Mind II in September.

COMING SOON

Hearts & Minds II



An Original Look at
Jewish Festivals
& Significant
Jewish Dates

By Rabbi Pini Dunner

NEW!

Children's Play Area

Open During Kiddush

Toys, Books, Games and
Activities during Kiddush
for Kids!

NOTES FOR PARENTS:

- ♦ Children must be supervised at all times
- ♦ The Balcony and Risers are off-limits
 - ♦ No Playing Under the Tables
 - ♦ No Running (Throughout the Rest of the Building)

Please Return All the
Toys to their Containers
before you leave

YINBH SISTERHOOD

Yahrtzeits

Heinrich Fuchs

Chaim Shaul ben Yitzchak z"l

Father of

Aaron Fuchs

Grandfather of

Jason Fuchs

Yahrtzeit - 12 Tammuz

Nosson Liebermann

Natan Alter ben Shraga Zvi

ha Cohen z"l

Father of

Rivka Nissel

Yahrtzeit - 13 Tammuz

Jonas Herskovitz

Yonah ben Rav Shalom z"l

Father of

Mark Herskovitz

Yahrtzeit - 14 Tammuz

Rabbi Aba Dunner

Rav Avraham Moshe ben Rav

Yosef Tzvi HaLevi z"l

Father of

Rabbi Pini Dunner

Yahrtzeit - 15 Tammuz

Frances Schloss

Freida Ada bat Yechezkel Pesach a"h

Wife of

Stephen Schloss

Yahrtzeit - 16 Tammuz

Naftali Tzvi Frankel

Naftali Tzvi ben Chaim Yaakov z"l

Father of

David Frankel

Yahrtzeit - 17 Tammuz

Anita Bernstein

Hinda a"h

Mother of

Barbara Bernstein

Yahrtzeit - 17 Tammuz

Paul Feder z"l Gemara Shiur

לע"נ פנחס אליהו בן שמשון הלוי

Join Rabbi Dunner for his
Gemara Shiur on Shabbat
45 minutes before Shacharit

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Shirin Azizzadeh

Nasrin Mostadim

Howard Feldberg

Ariel Schnitzer

Grace Stoll

Joseph Samuel

Aliza Rosenstein

Denise Richter

Joshua Zeller

Edwin Gromis

Payam Eliahoo

Membership Renewal 5784

All current members are invited
to renew their membership for
the upcoming year 5784.

Please visit yinbh.org/renewal

You can also call the office at
310-276-7650 or email
office@yinbh.org.

Once you renew your
membership, please reserve
your seats for the High
Holidays.

Order your Arba Minim directly
from the shul. Order by
September 21st.

Place Names in the Yizkor
Booklet. Submit by September
11th.

Sign up your children or
grandchildren for youth groups
during High Holiday Services

Beverlyhillssynagogue.org



Mazal
Tov


Michael & Susan Baum on
a new baby granddaughter
born to their daughter and
son in law **Stefanie and
Jeremy Sandel** on June 27.

Baby is named
Linda Esther Sandel
after her paternal
grandmother.



Challah Braiding

THURSDAY, AUGUST 31ST
5PM-6:30PM



Challah braiding with
inspiration for the new year.
Women of all ages welcome.
Light Refreshments served.

Register at yinbh.org/challah

\$54 per person • \$18 under 25
Sponsorships start at \$180

TISHA B'AV FILM SCREENING

99% of those who carried out the murders
in the Holocaust were never prosecuted.....
They were never even questioned. Why?

GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER(S)



The
Guardian

No17 of the 50 Best Films of 2021 in the UK
THE HIGHEST RATED DOCUMENTARY ON THE LIST

**WEDNESDAY,
JULY 26TH**

6:00pm Mincha

7:59pm Fast Begins

8:10pm Mincha/Maariv,
followed by Megillat
Eicha

**THURSDAY,
JULY 27TH**

8:00am Shacharit/Kinnot
*Tallis and Tefillin are not
worn*

12:59pm Chatzot

4:45pm Film Screening:
Getting Away with
Murder(s)

7:45pm Mincha/Maariv
with tefillin & leining

8:33pm Fast Ends

RSVP at

BEVERLYHILLSSYNAGOGUE.ORG/TISHABAV