

Tefilla Notebook

11 Av • Va'etchanan • Shabbat Nachamu

July 28-29, 2023

Steven Dorfman, President

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Dear Members and Friends,

I need to confess something: I have, over time, developed a considerable expertise in bitter disagreements and intractable arguments – and particularly those that take place within the Jewish community. To be clear, this expertise isn't born of a love for confrontation, nor have I ever been overly involved in resolving difficult disputes or mediating contentious situations. Rather, my expertise is rooted in the thirty-plus years I've spent amassing an expansive collection of literature—original books, pamphlets, manuscripts, and broadsides—that detail polemics and conflicts within the Jewish world.

My collection spans several centuries, and ranges from ancient texts to contemporary publications. It also covers a vast array of feuds: monetary, political, legal, territorial, and even controversies surrounding what we might think are meaningless interpretations of obscure Jewish texts or Hebrew pronunciation methods.

One of the most striking aspects of these conflicts, or more specifically, those who partake in them, is the paradox of conviction. It turns out that the stronger each side's belief is in their righteousness, and the deeper their conviction that their opponents are in the wrong, the more elastic they become with how far they are willing to go to gain an advantage. This flexibility often stems from a belief that their stance is not merely correct, but vitally important—potentially serving as a bulwark against some perceived danger. In these situations, combatants in a polemic might readily abandon the rules of civility and fair play, and resort to any means necessary in order to prevail, all the while asserting their righteousness and virtue.

In reality, the truth, or some part of it, usually resides on both sides of an argument. Even if the core of a dispute could be objectively arbitrated, declaring one side totally right and the other totally wrong is rarely a simple task. The "wrong" side may well possess merits that are not so easily dismissed. This situation segues into a more worrying question: what happens when both sides are right, which will result in neither side ever conceding? Such a scenario doesn't just spell disaster – it could lead to total devastation. And it is exactly this scenario that is currently unfolding in our beloved Israel, with the country literally tearing itself apart over the judicial reform bill.

On one side, there's the administration and their supporters—those who lean right in Israeli politics—who insist that the current system of government is biased against them, as it allows Supreme Court judges to set aside laws they consider "unreasonable." This is the side that is intent on curbing the Supreme Court's power. On the other side, we find the centrists and leftists, who view the proposed reform as dangerous, and as an ominous precedent. The hundreds of thousands who have taken to the streets to oppose the judicial reform bill see it as the thin edge of a very dangerous wedge that could eventually erode the only existing check against potential governmental excesses. Truthfully, and rather ironically, such excesses could materialize under any administration, regardless of its alignment on the political spectrum, if it seeks to amass dictatorial powers.

Here's the crux of the matter: both sides have valid arguments, yet neither is willing to yield. The most disconcerting aspect of it all is the unbridled demonstration of the paradox of conviction. Both sides consider themselves "right," leading them to think that the ends justify the means. The government has steamrolled ahead with the contentious legislation, while those who oppose the government are grinding the

nation to a halt. This situation has evolved well beyond a political disagreement that can be resolved by compromise—it is nothing less than a high-stakes, no-holds-barred, zero-sum game, with both factions prepared for a battle to the bitter end.

Well, let me spell out that bitter end. Firstly – and you can take my word on this, as an expert on acrimonious disputes between Jewish factions going back centuries – in a fight like this there are never any winners. Secondly, and this is far more worrying – the biggest loser in this fight won't be either side, it will be the vigorous if occasionally overly-effervescent democracy that has set Israel apart from so many other countries which emerged in the wake of the Second World War, and particularly those in the Middle East.

Some months ago, I saw an article by the Bloomberg columnist, Matt Levine. It was an absolute eye-opener. "Banking is a confidence trick," it began. "You put money in the bank today because you are confident you can take it out tomorrow... If you show up at the ATM at any time of day or night, you expect it to give you your dollars. But the bank doesn't just put your dollars in a box and wait for you to take them out; the bank uses its depositors' money to make loans or buy bonds, and just keeps a little bit around for people who need cash. If everyone asked for their money back tomorrow, the bank wouldn't have it. But everyone is confident that if they ask for their money back tomorrow, the bank will have it. So, they mostly don't ask for it, so when they do, the bank does have it. The widespread belief that banks have the money is what makes it true."

This week I suddenly realized that this same concept can be applied to democracy. Democracy, much like a bank, operates on the illusion of functionality and stability. If a significant proportion of a democracy's citizens start to lose faith in the system, the illusion shatters, and anarchy is not far behind. No government, whether democratic or otherwise, can survive if the illusion of authority and control crumbles.

At the beginning of Parshat Va'etchanan, Moses recalls pleading with God to enter the Promised Land—an appeal that was ultimately rejected because of a seemingly inoffensive act. According to various commentaries, God's commandment for Moses to speak to the rock for it to bring forth water after Miriam's passing was deliberately intended to strengthen the people's faith. But instead of speaking to the rock, Moses struck the rock. This seemingly insignificant deviation from God's command caused the people to question Moses' ability, and even to question God. As a result, God decided that Moses' leadership was no longer viable, and a replacement was found.

This story is a stark reminder that all leaders, just like Moses, bear responsibility not only for the direct results of their actions, but also for indirect results – such as the loss of faith in the system they are a part of. Actions that erode this faith, even if they can be justified, are unacceptable. For Moses, it meant his leadership tenure was over. Joshua would have to take his place so that the system wouldn't collapse. And, despite all his appeals to God, there was no way Moses could change that reality.

The parallels with Israel's current political crisis are stark. When leaders act in ways that diminish faith in the system, they don't just risk forfeiting their legislative agenda, they also risk destroying the system itself. Which means that notwithstanding the rights and wrongs on both sides of the current fight, it is a fact that democracy in Israel is hanging by a hair. It can't be allowed to collapse.

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



FRIDAY, JULY 28

7:39pm CANDLELIGHTING
6:30pm KABBALAT SHABBAT

SATURDAY, JULY 29

8:30 am GEMARA SHIUR
9:15 am SHACHARIT
7:20 pm PIRKEI AVOT SHIUR
7:45 pm MINCHA
8:35 pm MAARIV
8:39 pm SHABBAT ENDS

WEEKDAY DAVENING

Sun	8:00am	7:35pm
Mon- Thurs	7:00am	7:35pm
Fri	7:00am	6:30pm

SAVE THE DATE

September 7th: Book launch and signing for Rabbi Dunner's new book, *Hearts & Minds II*.
Details to follow.

Let's Talk Sisterhood

with Gina Raphael & Maryjo Schnitzer

Join us for a special pre-New Year evening of inspiration and challah braiding for teens and women of all ages. Featuring special guest hosts **"The Sephardic Spice Girls"** and Jewish Children's Author **Sarah Sassoon**.

Sign up now, space is limited.
Thursday August 31st, 5-7pm
Sign up at yinbh.org/challah

♦
Watch Out for the upcoming book launch of **Hearts & Minds II** on September 7th.

♦
Join us for Shabbat and Sunday Gourmet Lunches on Rosh Hashana 5784. Sign up now!

Yahrtzeits

Sylvia Varon

Sara bat Yehoshua a"h
Mother of
Sam Varon
Yahrtzeit - 12 Av

Aliza Elhiani

Aliza bat Masoud z"l
Mother of
Simon Elhiani
Yahrtzeit - 22 Av

STEVEN & VIVIAN DORFMAN KEILIM MIKVAH

STEVEN & VIVIAN DORFMAN
KEILIM MIKVAH



The Keilim Mikvah is open for use. You can buzz-in for access via the intercom at the entrance to the garage, during weekday office hours. It is customary to give tzedakah before doing to mitzvah of tovelling Keilim. You can give a donation directly to the keilim mikvah by visiting yinbh.org/keilim

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

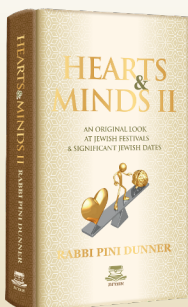
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

DAVID MARKOWITZ
JEFF GROSS
CHLOE HALIMI
EVAN COHEN
TEDDY FOGELMAN
FAYE KELLERMAN
VICTOR COHENCA
AMY KESTENBAUM
ELLIOTT KAHN
ELIE GINDI
ROBERTA KIMMEL
SIMON RUBINSTEIN

Happy Anniversary

Michael & Ariella Novack

COMING SOON



Hearts & Minds II

An Original
Look at Jewish
Festivals

& Significant
Jewish Dates

By Rabbi Pini Dunner

We have two gorgeous displays of marble yahrtzeit plaques on the back walls of our sanctuary. This is a beautiful way of memorializing the names of departed loved ones. Yahrtzeit plaques cost \$1,800.

To order a plaque or for more information contact Madeline Kramer at mkramer@yinbh.org

Membership Renewal 5784

All current members are invited to renew their membership for the upcoming year 5784. Please visit yinhb.org/renewal. You can also call the office at 310-276-7650 or email office@yinhb.org.

Once you renew your membership, you can...



Reserve your **High Holiday Seats** at yinhb.org/seats. Please Reserve by September 8th.



Order your **Arba Minim** directly from the shul. Please order by September 21st. Order online at yinhb.org/arbaminim



Place names in the **Yizkor Booklet**. Please submit by September 11th. Sign up at yinhb.org/yizkor



Sign up your children or grandchildren for **Youth Group** during High Holiday Services. Sign up at yinhb.org/youth.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HAS ALREADY
RENEWED THEIR MEMBERSHIP FOR 5784

ROSH HASHANA 5784 LUNCHEONS

SPACE IS LIMITED - SIGN UP NOW



YINBH SISTERHOOD IS PLANNING ROSH HASHANA LUNCHEONS
ON BOTH DAYS OF ROSH HASHANA SHABBAT & SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 16TH & SEPTEMBER 17TH, 2023

\$225 ADULTS
\$150 AGES 10 AND BELOW

www.yinhb.org/RHLunch

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Yinhb 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.yinhb.org/mikvah or Download the MikvahCloud app

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MIKVAH

OUR LOCATION
9261 Alden Drive
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CONTACT US
310-299-1792 (Text Only)
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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

YINBH
SISTERHOOD

Challah Braiding

THURSDAY, AUGUST 31ST

5:00-7:00PM

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

FEATURING

**Sharon Gomperts &
Rachel Emquies Sheff,**
The Sephardic Spice Girls

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

Sarah Sassoon,
Author of "Shoham's Bangle"



Register at yinbh.org/challah

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



SHARSHERET®
The Jewish Breast & Ovarian Cancer Community

