

# Tefilla Notebook



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

310-276-7650 • [office@yinh.org](mailto:office@yinh.org)



Dear Members and Friends,

In January of 49 BCE, Julius Caesar, then the governor of Cisalpine Gaul, Transalpine Gaul, and Illyricum, boldly led the 13th Legion—comprising approximately 5,000 legionaries—across the Rubicon River, a seemingly insignificant waterway in northern Italy. But this action wasn't merely a physical crossing; it represented a monumental shift – an act of profound iconoclasm that irrevocably altered the course of Roman history.

The Rubicon had always served as a sacrosanct boundary, with Roman law explicitly forbidding any general from bringing an army across it, as doing so would be seen as a direct threat to the Republic. Julius Caesar's decision to march his armed soldiers over this boundary was not just a military maneuver but a brazen challenge to the established norms and authorities of Rome. By crossing the Rubicon, Julius Caesar was effectively declaring war on the Roman Senate and signaling the end of his allegiance to the traditional structures of the Republic. Indeed, the phrase "crossing the Rubicon" has since become emblematic of a pivotal point-of-no-return.

Significantly, this single audacious act by Julius Caesar on that cold January morning would eventually culminate in the fall of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire. By 44 BCE, just five years after his fateful decision at the Rubicon, Caesar was declared "dictator perpetuo," and although his reign was cut short by his assassination soon afterward, the turbulence that followed saw the Republic's carefully maintained balance collapse. The ascendancy of Emperor Augustus, once known as Octavian, marked the dawn of the Principate era. While Augustus presented his authority within the guise of the Republic's traditions, it was evident that Rome had transitioned to an autocratic rule, with a dictatorial emperor at its helm.

The unraveling of the Roman Republic didn't happen as an event out of the blue. There were several early indicators, most notably the undermining of the judiciary. High-profile figures began to challenge the judicial system, and Caesar himself evaded trial by dismissing allegations against him. Rumors had linked him to the notorious Catiline Conspiracy—an unsuccessful coup led by the senator Lucius Sergius Catilina in 63 BCE. Although this revolutionary plot failed, its repercussions were profound, ensnaring many of Rome's elite in a web of suspicion and mistrust, and sucking the great and the good into its murky waters. While Caesar's exact role remains a matter of debate, the fact that he never faced trial was a testament to his growing influence and ability to navigate, and perhaps manipulate, the political landscape of Rome, rather than as an indicator of his innocence.

The degradation of respect for the judiciary played a significant role in the downfall of the Roman Republic and served as a chilling prelude to the collapse of other great systems in history. The fair and consistent execution of the law is indispensable for societal stability; undermining the judiciary, whether through overt actions or gradual erosion of its credibility, jeopardizes the very foundation of order. The legal edifice of the Roman Republic was once revered as a beacon of justice and stood as a cornerstone of their civilization. Its marginalization and subsequent decay led to the unraveling of the Republic. This historical precedent should resonate deeply today, given the escalating disdain for judicial institutions in our era. Such contempt is like a cancer, threatening to devastate the fragile balance upon which our society is based. Once faith in this pivotal institution erodes, and collective trust wanes, the aftermath will almost certainly be characterized by chaos, uncertainty, and anarchy.

Which brings me to the painful topic of the Trump indictments. Until now, I have deliberately refrained from discussing the various indictments targeting former US President Donald Trump. But the unabashed assaults on the US legal system and its officers—emanating from both Trump and his acolytes—compel me to speak out, and not because I want to take a position on his guilt or innocence. Those views I will keep to myself. But as someone steeped in history,

I must confidently assert that we are not, as some claim, in uncharted territory. This trajectory is not only familiar, but history's lessons are no secret. Indeed, the projected outcome is not pretty.

Earlier this week, Abigail Jo Shry from Alvin, Texas, was arrested and charged with threatening the life of U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan, the judge overseeing the criminal case against Trump in Washington. Court documents captured her chilling threat: "You are in our sights, we want to kill you." And while Trump has not issued threats of this magnitude, his characterization of Judge Chutkan as "highly partisan" and "very biased & unfair" only adds fuel to the rising flames of animosity. More disturbingly, recent charges against Trump have sparked a surge in hostile rhetoric on far-right platforms. Several posts on Gab showcased disturbing images of nooses and gallows, directed towards Fani Willis, the Fulton County district attorney in Georgia responsible for prosecuting Trump and 18 of his associates over attempts to overturn the 2020 election results.

Some may argue that Trump's habitual approach has always been to disparage those who stand in his way or oppose him. But what about his political opponents? Trump's kneejerk disdain for his adversaries hardly excuses their reactions. Republican presidential contender and tech mogul Vivek Ramaswamy was withering in his criticism of the Willis charges, terming them "politicized persecutions through prosecution." Florida's Governor Ron DeSantis voiced his concern about the "criminalization of politics," expressing doubts over its implications for the country. And Senator Tim Scott from South Carolina fiercely criticized the legal actions against the former president, claiming that using the "legal system against political opponents is un-American and unacceptable."

In the midst of all this, one might ask: isn't it more appropriate for an accused individual to have their day in court, rather than for them to claim the court system is useless, so that the veracity of their innocence or guilt can be properly scrutinized? A prosecutor's role is clear: to pinpoint criminal activities and ensure that the evidence is laid out for a jury while providing the defense ample opportunity to establish the accused's innocence. If the accused is found guilty, they retain the right to challenge the decision. This entire process lies at the very heart of our societal principles. Trashing it by leveling allegations of prejudice against judges and claiming that prosecutors are manipulating the judicial system is a dangerous game, and plays into the hands of those who want to see our way of life disappear into a maelstrom of turmoil.

One of the central themes of the Torah is that without a system of justice, chaos will inevitably prevail, and ultimately everyone will suffer – even the innocent. Parshat Shoftim begins with Moses' instructions to the Israelites, in anticipation of their imminent nation-building endeavor (Deut. 16:18):

שָׁפְטִים וְשָׂרִים תָּתֵן לָךְ בְּכָל שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ וְשָׁפְטוּ אֶת הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט צֶדֶק – "Appoint judges and officers [of the law] for your tribes, in all the settlements that God is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice." The inclusion of the words "for your tribes" is an overt acknowledgement that there will always be different factions within society, with competing interests – but judges and officers of the law are always to be treated as sacred, somehow above it all. To be sure, judges are equally warned to be impartial, and to remain untainted by bribery or corruption. But corrupt judges will always be individual exceptions; the system itself remains robust. What is amply clear is that those who cross the Rubicon and suggest that the system is anything less than robust are playing with fire.

Julius Caesar seems to have been aware of this danger. Upon crossing the Rubicon, he uttered the immortal words "Alea iacta est" – "the die is cast." Perhaps had he known then where that die would ultimately take him, he might have acted differently. With the lessons of history before us, let us ensure we don't cast our own die toward a path of institutional erosion and societal instability.

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



## FRIDAY, AUGUST 18

7:18pm CANDLELIGHTING  
6:30pm KABBALAT SHABBAT

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 19

8:30 am GEMARA SHIUR  
9:15 am SHACHARIT  
7:00 pm PIRKEI AVOT SHIUR  
7:25 pm MINCHA  
8:15 pm MAARIV  
8:16 pm SHABBAT ENDS

## WEEKDAY DAVENING

Sun	8:00am	7:20pm
Mon- Thurs	7:00am	7:20pm
Fri	7:00am	6:30pm

**DON'T FORGET TO RENEW  
YOUR MEMBERSHIP AND  
RESERVE YOUR HIGH  
HOLIDAY SEATS.**

## Let's Talk Sisterhood

with Gina Raphael & Maryjo Schnitzer

Come to our 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

Tickets not sold at door.

Thursday August 31st, 5-7pm

Register at [yinhb.org/challah](http://yinhb.org/challah)

Thank you to sponsors

Gina Raphael & Kateryna Lastenko



Join us for the book launch of Hearts & Minds II on September 7th, in partnership with Wizo, with special guest Ruth Wasserman Lande, former MK and News Correspondent.

Register at [yinhb.org/booklaunch](http://yinhb.org/booklaunch)

## Happy Anniversary

Solomon & Flora Yamin

## THE GREAT COAT CLOSET CLEANOUT OF 2023

Please take all personal possessions out of the coat closet.

An email with images of all items found in the closet has been sent out.

Anything that is not claimed by September 8th will be donated.

## Yahrtzeits

Myron Bayer

Yitzhak ben Eliezer z"l

Father of

Michael Bayer

Yahrtzeit - 4 Elul

David Bensoussan

David ben Sultana z"l

Father of

Ginette Hodara

Yahrtzeit - 5 Elul

Margarete Rosenfeld

Zipora bat David a"h

Mother of

Robert Rosenfeld

Yahrtzeit - 7 Elul

Benjamin Socolosky

Binyamin ben Chaya z"l

Father of

Rose Kempf

Yahrtzeit - 8 Elul

Leo Presser

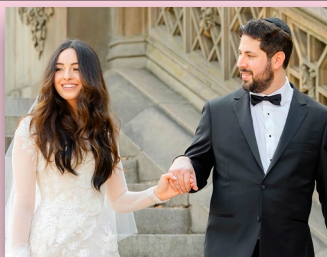
Arieh Leib ben Yirachmiel

Shlomo Hacohen z"l

Father of

Marilyn Sohacheski

Yahrtzeit - 8 Elul



*Mazal Tov Evan and Marci Cohen on their wedding this past Tuesday. Mazal Tov to Hart & Debbie Cohen and Todd & Felice Soifer*

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

YAAKOV LEV COHENCA

ANNA BAUM

JORDAN RUBINSTEIN

## Maui Wildfires



We are all devastated by the reports of death and destruction coming from Maui.

Here are a few charities you may want to consider donating to:

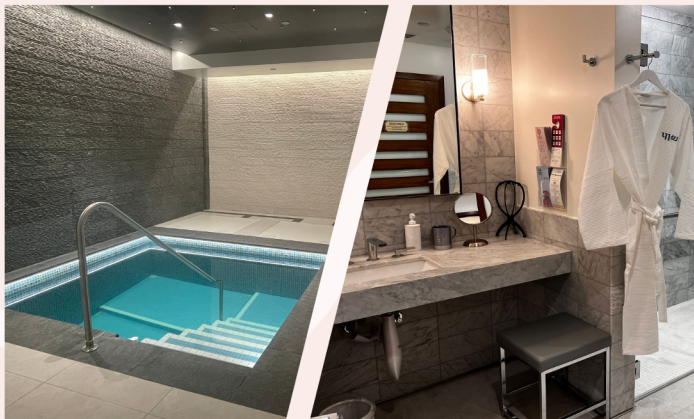
- Jewish Federation of North America's Hawaii Wildlife Fund
- Chabad of Maui's Disaster Relief Fund
- The Jewish Congregation of Maui
- Maui Humane Society

## Thank You

Thank you to **Sol & Giselle Dunst** for sponsoring next week's parsha shiur in memory of Sol's father, **Joseph Dunst, Yosef Dovid ben Yaakov Shlomo z"l**, whose yahrtzeit is on the 14th of Elul.



# 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)  
[www.yinbh.org/mikvah](http://www.yinbh.org/mikvah)

# COMING TO YINBH ON SEPTEMBER 9TH SATURDAY NIGHT FERVOR

MUSICAL KUMZITS AND SELICHOT



YINBH presents

SATURDAY NIGHT FERVOR

MOTZEI SHABBAT KUMZITS AND SELICHOT

starring RABBI PINI DUNNER, with RABBI ARYEH PERLSTEIN.

Featuring YOU!

Produced by THE STAFF OF YINBH.

Join us for an inspiring kumzits followed by a  
soulful musical Selichot starting at 9:30pm

## Membership Renewal 5784

All current members are invited to renew their membership for the upcoming year 5784. Please visit [yinbh.org/renewal](http://yinbh.org/renewal). You can also call the office at 310-276-7650 or email [office@yinbh.org](mailto:office@yinbh.org).

*Once you renew your membership, you can...*



Reserve your **High Holiday Seats** at [yinbh.org/seats](http://yinbh.org/seats).  
Please Reserve by September 8th.



Order your **Arba Minim** directly from the shul.  
Please order by September 21st. Order online at  
[yinbh.org/arbaminim](http://yinbh.org/arbaminim)



Place names in the **Yizkor Booklet**. Please submit  
by September 11th. Sign up at [yinbh.org/yizkor](http://yinbh.org/yizkor)



Sign up your children or grandchildren for  
**Youth Group** during High Holiday Services.  
Sign up at [yinbh.org/youth](http://yinbh.org/youth).

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



## 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](http://yinbh.org/challah)

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





# BOOK *Launch*

with

**Rabbi Pini Dunner**



**Thursday  
7 September 2023**

**6:30pm** – Cheese & Wine Reception

**7:30pm** – Book Launch Q&A:

Rabbi Dunner with Ruth Wasserman Lande



*Special Guest*

**Ruth Wasserman  
Lande**

Former MK & i24 news commentator



\$54 per person including a signed  
copy of Rabbi Dunner's New Book

Register at

**[www.yinbh.org/booklaunch](http://www.yinbh.org/booklaunch)**

This event is being graciously sponsored by

**Bob Zeller & Nadine Gerson**

