

Tefilla Notebook

22-23 Tishrei • Shemini Atzeret • Simchat Torah

October 6-8, 2023

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

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Dear Members and Friends,

At the heart of the Jewish faith lies a powerful idea that underscores every aspect of what we do and who we are. It is based on the reality that every person, no matter who they are, faces tough times and has challenging moments. Nevertheless, despite this undeniable fact and the harsh trials we often face, we are still always required to be joyous.

Finding joy and being happy is an act of resilience and a testament to the indomitable human spirit – but more importantly, it is a tangible acknowledgment that we have faith in God. Moments of happiness, no matter how fleeting or difficult, serve as powerful reminders that adversity is temporary and brighter days lie ahead. They uplift the soul, renew hope, and provide the strength we need to face our challenges head-on. Celebrating while things are difficult is not a denial of the pain, rather it is an affirmation of life, and of God – a conscious choice we make to focus on silver linings.

On the face of it, the last day of Sukkot is a bittersweet moment. It concludes a season of festivals and celebrations which have been the rhythm of our lives for almost a month. Additionally, we are on the edge of the oncoming winter – a season of uncertainty and insecurity, long nights and short days, cold weather and bleak skies.

Yet, just as we face this impending melancholy the Jewish faith expects us to celebrate Simchat Torah, a day marked by singing and dancing, devoted to joy and celebration. This juxtaposition is not a coincidence. It is meant to remind us that even when our future is potentially grim and all the festivities are behind us, we are still expected to be cheerful. As winter begins its descent, Simchat Torah rises like a beacon, illuminating the path ahead. It encourages us to embrace the cyclical nature of life, to find happiness amid looming uncertainty, and to dance with unbridled enthusiasm – so that we show gratitude for the life God has granted us in this moment.

As it happens, this concept of finding joy amidst adversity is far more than an arcane philosophy; it has been lived and experienced throughout Jewish history. Perhaps one of the most profound illustrations of this concept comes from a dark chapter in the 20th century. Some years ago, I read a remarkable story about a group of teenage boys who were caught up in the vice of Nazi cruelty during the Second World War. It was the fall of 1944, and the youngsters had been included in the frantic roundup of Hungarian Jewry that resulted in the murder of over half a million Jews over a period of just a few months.

In a cruel twist of fate, being young had suddenly become a death sentence for those boys, who hadn't yet turned eighteen. For some reason, the death camp commandant had decided to kill them, rather than use them for slave labor. Maybe it was the Jewish holidays season that provoked his sudden urge to kill these youngsters – his twisted way of turning a period of rejoicing into one of blanket terror.

Most of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust who were marched to the gas chambers were unable to comprehend what was happening to them. Ripped away from their homes and communities, they were shipped in cattle cars to gruesome death camps and summarily murdered. As they were piled into the gas chamber, these Jews were in such a state of shock and fear, they were almost completely powerless to react. But some of them were different – and among them were these fifty boys. On the appointed day, they were led to the gas chambers under the pretense that they

needed disinfecting showers. Having been in the camp for a few weeks, they were fully aware of the reality: there was no water in the 'shower rooms,' instead it was lethal gas that would come out of the pipes, and they were going to die.

As they stood in the gas chamber, naked, waiting for the inevitable to happen, one of the boys suddenly announced to his comrades: "My friends, don't forget, it's Simchat Torah today – which means that we must celebrate and be happy." There was a stunned silence. "We have nothing left," he continued, "and although we might die in a few minutes – right now, we can sing and dance with God, because he is surely right here with us at this moment."

The joy that erupted after the boy spoke had never previously been seen in the harsh confines of a Nazi gas chamber. The boys sang with all their might. They jumped up and down with unbridled passion, as they sang the words from Psalms (19:8): **תְּהִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נֶפֶשׁ** – "God's Torah is perfect, it reinvigorates the soul." Outside, the Nazi guards exchanged puzzled glances. What was going on? They were used to hearing screams and cries of terror; they had certainly never heard sounds of singing and dancing!

Typically, at this stage of the extermination process, the Nazi executioners' protocol was to drop Zyklon-B pellets into the gas chamber, releasing the lethal hydrogen cyanide gas to kill all inside. However, the unexpected singing and dancing stopped them from doing it, the unusual behavior of the boys prompting them to summon their commanding officer out of sheer disbelief. The officer arrived and was mortified by what he saw through the peephole. He immediately ordered the guards to open the door and bring the boys outside. "What's going on," he barked, "what's with this dancing and singing?"

The boy who'd started it all, having banished any vestige of fear he may have felt when walking into the gas chamber, defiantly replied as he looked the Nazi officer straight in the eye: "We are singing and dancing because we are delighted to be leaving a world ruled by vicious Nazis like you, and because soon we will be reunited with our parents and families who you murdered. Aren't those good reasons for us to be happy?"

The Nazi officer was apoplectic with rage. "How dare you be happy when we are about to kill you! Do you know what... death in the gas chamber is too easy for you. Tomorrow, I will have you all tortured to death, in the cruelest way possible." He then ordered the guards to detain the boys overnight, and for the torture killings to be carried out the following morning. But fate had another twist in store. That afternoon, a high-ranking Nazi, in search of robust workers for a nearby armaments factory, discovered that these boys were available. Impressed by their youthful vigor, he seconded them to labor camp, and early the next morning the fifty boys were loaded into trucks and driven away. As they left, the boys were singing. And as far as I recall, all fifty of them survived the war.

This story is far more than an inspirational anecdote. The singing and dancing of these fifty boys evoke not just the essence of Simchat Torah but the very heart of Jewish resilience: declaring joy even amid adversity. Because Simchat Torah is more than just a celebration of the Torah; it's a clarion call to life itself, a beacon of hope even when faced with a harsh winter. As we reflect on our own challenges, let this story be a poignant reminder of the importance of cherishing each moment, and always finding a reason to dance.

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom and a Chag Sameach,
Rabbi Pini Dunner

FRIDAY, OCT 6TH
HOSHANA RABBA
7:00 AM SHACHARIT*

*Hoshanas available for sale at shul
11:00 AM VIRTUAL YIZKOR
6:13 PM CANDLE LIGHTING
6:15 PM KABBALAT YOM TOV
*DON'T FORGET TO LIGHT
YIZKOR CANDLE*

SATURDAY, OCT 7TH
SHEMINI ATZERET
8:30 AM SHACHARIT

10:30 AM (Approx) YIZKOR
6:15 PM MINCHA
7:00 PM MAARIV
7:07 PM CANDLELIGHTING USING
AN EXISTING FLAME
7:10 PM HAKAFOT

SUNDAY, OCT 8TH
SIMCHAT TORAH
9:00 AM SHACHARIT

10:30 AM HAKAFOT
10:30 AM KIDDUSH
6:15 PM MINCHA
6:25 PM SHIUR
7:00 PM MAARIV
7:05 PM YOM TOV ENDS

WEEKDAY DAVENING
Mon-Thu 7:00am 6:15pm
Fri 7:00am 6:05pm

Please note on Shemini Atzeret there will be no Gemara Shiur and services will begin at 8:30am

Let's Talk Sisterhood

with Gina Raphael & Maryjo Schnitzer

We hope you have a meaningful Shemini Atzeret and a joyous Simchat Torah!

LIVE VIRTUAL YIZKOR SERVICE

יִזְכּוֹר



Friday October 6th,
11:00am PST via zoom

Zoom Code: 310 276 7650
Password: yinbh

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

MAX HALIMI
ADAM SHAKED
NETHANIEL
WATERMAN
NOA BRENNER
DANIEL MILLER
DEBBIE SASOVER

If you would like to
join the
Mincha/Maariv
WhatsApp Group, please
send a message to the
Rabbi on WhatsApp at
310-499-3407

Yahrtzeits

Otto Schloss

Moshe ben Pinchas z"l
Father of

Dr. H. Stephen Schloss
Yahrtzeit - 22 Tishrei

David Theuer-Holtz

David ben Yosef Baruch z"l
Father of

Nora Holtz
Yahrtzeit - 24 Tishrei

Bernat Fixler

Baruch ben Noah z"l
Father of

Sue Varon
Yahrtzeit - 25 Tishrei

Asher Javaherian

Asher ben Meyer z"l
Father of

Vahid Javaherian
Yahrtzeit - 26 Tishrei

Ronit Shacher

Ronit bat Eliyahu a"h
Sister of

Ruth Gaba
Yahrtzeit - 26 Tishrei

Amir Daniel

Menasha ben Abraham z"l
Father of

Shohreh Ashouri
Yahrtzeit - 27 Tishrei

Sylvia Greenspan

Sara bat Dov Ber
Mother of

Evan Greenspan
Yahrtzeit - 28 Tishrei

This past weeks Parsha shiur was sponsored by **Dr. Susan Graysen** in memory of her mother, **Ruth Kahnowitz Davidoff**, Ruth bat Moshe Yona HaKohen z"l, whose yahrtzeit is on the 19th of Tishrei.

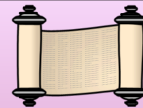
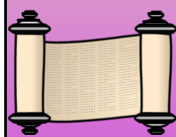
STEVEN & VIVIAN DORFMAN KEILIM MIKVAH



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

Thank you to
Raphy & Rivka
Nissel & Lee Samson
for sponsoring
Kiddushes on
Simchat Torah.



WELCOME YU BACHURIM!

GAVI DOMSKY

AKIVA TEICHMAN
DANNY SRULOWITZ
ELI SUDWERTS
ETHAN SCHECHTER



FRIDAY NIGHT *Dinner*

**CELEBRATING RABBI DUNNER'S
10TH ANNIVERSARY AT YINBH
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13TH • 7PM**

\$125 PER PERSON

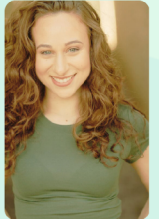
**RSVP AT
YINBH.ORG/DINNER**

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OCTOBER 7th - 7 PM
SATURDAY NIGHT HAKAFOT



SPINNING WHEEL DANCE COMPETITION
SIMCHAT TORAH THEMED TREATS & PRIZES
BAR TENDER + COTTON CANDY MOCKTAILS FOR THE KIDS CLUB
KIDDUSH - TAPAS STYLE
KIDS CLUB DANCE TIPS WITH GALIT FRIEDLANDER
PROFESSIONAL DANCER, CHOREOGRAPHER, COACH,
+ HOST OF DANCESPEAK



DANCE DANCE DANCE

A SIMCHAT TORAH CELEBRATION!

OCTOBER 8th - 10 AM
SUNDAY MORNING HAKAFOT

LIVE CHILLBACHI ICE CREAM ROLLING STATIONS
+ ALCOHOL INFUSED ROLLING STATION FOR ADULTS!
SIMCHAT TORAH THEMED TREATS & PRIZES
SIMCHAT TORAH FLAGS & SWAG
KIDDUSH + BUFFET

