

# Tefilla Notebook

19 Kislev • Vayishlach

December 1-2, 2023

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

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Dear Members and Friends,

I have just spent the past few days in Israel. This was not my first visit since October 7th, and Israel has of course been uppermost in my thoughts throughout that time – but this week's visit was without doubt a life-changing experience. Together with colleagues from the Jewish

Federation's LA Board of Rabbis, I traversed the country, and saw and heard things that I will never be able to unsee, nor unhear. And to be clear: I do not wish to unsee or unhear them, but the emotional impact they made will remain with me for the rest of my life.

On Tuesday morning we visited Kfar Aza. Until October 7th, Kfar Aza was an idyllic kibbutz on the northernmost part of the eastern border between the Gaza Strip and Israel. Now, it is a haunting reminder of the carnage of that cruel day.

Founded in 1951, and home to some 900 peace-loving, idealistic kibbutzniks, Kfar Aza was known as a pioneer in computerized irrigation, and as an eager promoter of peace projects. Every year over the past few years, members of the kibbutz would gather on open ground near the Gaza border – just half a mile away from the kibbutz boundary – and fly kites adorned with messages promoting peace and freedom that were directed towards their Palestinian neighbors. The annual tradition, known as Kites for Hope, was spearheaded as a response to the 2018 wave of terror in the form of explosives attached to kites flying into Israel from Gaza. Kites for Hope's creator was Aviv Kutz, a Kfar Aza resident who had also spent time in the United States.

This year, Kites for Hope was scheduled to take place on October 7th. It didn't happen. The 350 Hamas terrorists who swarmed the kibbutz early that morning, continuing their assault throughout the day, butchering and burning 68 residents and kidnapping 18 others, made sure of that. Heartbreakingly, Aviv, along with his wife Livnat and their three children Yonatan, Yiftach, and Rotem, were murdered in their home, where they were discovered days later. Just a few feet away from Aviv's brutalized body, in the living room of their modest house, lay the peace kite he and his family had intended to fly later on that day.

Standing just yards away from their home, we heard about Aviv and his family from their friend Maya. We also heard from Zion, who heads the Shaar Hanegev Regional Council citizen security force. He told us about his friend Ofir Libstein, the indefatigable mayor of Shaar Hanegev. That fateful morning, Ofir had attempted to protect his beloved Kfar Aza with a pistol he kept at his home, but he was soon mowed down in cold blood by a Hamas murderer on the road beside his house. A bullet hole from one of the bullets that killed him is still visible on the gatepost leading into his front yard, as are bloodstains. Nitzan, Ofir's 19-year-old son, was also a victim of the Kfar Aza massacre that day. Initially considered missing, his body was discovered 12 days later close to the Gaza border.

Zion, an impassive man with the kind of bearing and presence one expects of a security operative, suddenly and unexpectedly broke down and cried, as he described discovering his friend Ofir's body lying on the road on October 8th. He was certain that Ofir was deliberately targeted as part of the Hamas strategy to eliminate local leadership, in order to paralyze and confuse the whole area for as long as possible.

Suddenly, as Zion was speaking, a deafening explosion boomed from somewhere uncomfortably close to where we were standing. We all jumped, and our lives flashed in front of our eyes. We knew that there

was a truce, but we also knew that the deal between Hamas and Israel was very precarious. Zion reassured us that it was a controlled explosion, but later in the day we discovered that Hamas had breached the ceasefire, albeit briefly, claiming IDF provocation. In that moment we suddenly realized what it meant to live in Kfar Aza before October 7th, and, indeed, anywhere in proximity to rockets originating in Gaza. There is no way that Israel can continue to accept this threat to the lives of its citizens.

On Tuesday afternoon, we visited Camp Shura, the army base where hundreds of bodies were brought to be identified by the IDF rabbinic unit that specializes in this grisly work. The relatively new facility is the largest of its kind anywhere in the world outside the United States, able to cope with almost 300 bodies at any one time. But, as the rabbis grimly informed us, on October 7th and the days that followed, they were utterly overwhelmed, soon running out of gurneys on which to put the bodies. Instead of using gurneys, they had to put human remains on the floor, side by side. Even this wasn't enough, and they soon ran out of space on the floor. Some of the bodies had been so brutalized by the Hamas terrorists, that it wasn't possible to identify them, even by means of the most modern scientific methods.

That evening, we heard from Moshe Shapira, father of Aner, whose heroism and bravery saved the lives of 10 fellow partygoers at the ill-fated Nova rave. Aner, a natural leader, took charge of a group of 29 hiding in a concrete bomb shelter near the site of the party, and calmed them all down. Each time terrorists tossed in grenades from the outside, he tossed them back out, until one exploded in his hand, killing him instantly. The remaining survivors in the shelter hid among the dead. Some, such as Hersch Polin Goldberg, were taken by the terrorists into Gaza, where they remain, their fate unknown.

Moshe Shapira's composure was striking. He held up a poster-sized image of Aner – the last photo of his son, taken on a phone about 15 minutes before he died. You can see Aner from behind, his silhouette framed by an orange glow, as everyone else around him crouches as close to the ground as they can. Aner's strength and courage are eerily evident in that extraordinary photo; tragically, minutes later his body would be mutilated and shattered by the Hamas grenade.

On Wednesday we met with survivors of two of the villages that came under terrorist attack on October 7th: Netiv Ha'asara and Zikim. They are now living in a hotel on a picturesque mountaintop not far from Jerusalem, but despite the great care, the situation is far from ideal. Traumatized parents are unable to take care of their children, most of whom are totally disoriented by their harrowing experiences on October 7th – some of them lost close friends and relatives, others are just unable to decompress.

Of the survivors who spoke to us, Scottish-born Moira made the deepest impression. She has not had an easy life. After moving to Israel in the 70s to get married, she and her family were forced to move from the original Netiv Ha'asara village in Sinai, which was disbanded as part of the Camp David peace accord arrangements between Egypt and Israel. The new Netiv Ha'asara was built in an area that abuts the Erez border crossing on the north Gaza border. Initially, relations between residents and Gaza Arabs were positive, and workers from Gaza built all the homes in the village. But things deteriorated, particularly after Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005, and the Hamas takeover of the enclave in 2006.

Cont'd on page 2

## FRIDAY, DEC 1



4:27 PM CANDLELIGHTING  
4:30 PM KABBALAT SHABBAT  
**SATURDAY, DEC 2**  
8:30 AM GEMARA SHIUR  
9:15 AM SHACHARIT  
4:30 PM MINCHA  
5:20 PM MAARIV  
5:26 PM SHABBAT ENDS

## WEEKDAY DAVENING

Sun	8:00am	4:30pm
Mon- Thur	7:00am	4:30pm
Fri	7:00am	4:30pm

**BRING THEM HOME NOW**

## THANK YOU

This week's kiddush is sponsored by **Philip & Janice Kaufler** in honor of our special guest speakers **Special Sergeant Avi Komarchero & Major Nir Jonas**.



Cont'd from page 1

Rocket attacks began and became ever more frequent; one Hamas projectile even landed on the roof of Moira's house. She and her husband rebuilt their home and remained resilient, determined to stay, even after three people in the village were killed by rockets – in 2005, 2007 and 2010. The thought that Netiv Ha'asara could ever be overrun by terrorists was not even a consideration – but on October 7th it happened. Moira told us that 21 residents of Netiv Ha'asara were killed, ranging in age from 17 to 80 years old. Two of the victims were American citizens. After the IDF eventually arrived and neutralized the terrorists, all the surviving village residents were evacuated to two hotels – and eight weeks later, that is where they remain, in this temporary and unsettling setting.

Moira is a hardy woman – chirpy by disposition and determined by nature. She told us that all she wants now is to move back home, with the assurance that the security risks associated with living in Netiv Ha'asara have been mitigated once and for all. Despite everything she has been through, and despite the gruesome murder of her neighbors and friends, Moira's home of over forty years is where she wants to be – the sooner the better.

Listening to Moira was to hear a microcosm of everything that Israel now faces: the painful trauma of October 7th, combined with the bewildering instability of the present, and the ever-hovering uncertainty about the future. We muttered what we hoped were helpful words, but we knew, even as we said them, that the road ahead is charged with incredible challenges and painful difficulties – for Moira, and for everyone else.

We also stopped by at the Shamir Medical Center on the outskirts of Rishon LeTzion. We heard how the hospital quickly shifted into red alert on October 7th, transferring as many patients as they could to the safety of underground areas in the face of relentless rocket attacks. Soon, the wounded began to arrive in droves – all victims of the savage Hamas attacks. Hundreds were admitted, and, somehow, they managed to save every life – a truly remarkable achievement. Over the past few days, the hospital has been treating hostages released by Hamas as part of the deal associated with the pause in the Gaza campaign. Many of them were Thai workers, all of whom – despite their horrific experiences – have expressed their desire to stay in Israel.

Although the journey is far from over, the profound impact of our visit to Israel resonates deeply, evoking a sense of both urgency and unity. My experience in Israel this week was punctuated by tragedy and resilience, underscoring the crucial work that lies ahead. Critically, the crisis we have witnessed cannot be allowed to fade into the backdrop of our consciousness; instead, it demands our sustained attention and diligent action.

The unity and commitment displayed by all the members of the clergy mission, despite our differing backgrounds and congregations, was nothing short of inspirational. Our collective resolve has been strengthened, not only to support Israel and its people through these trying times, but also to continue our collaborative efforts back in the United States. This week, we committed ourselves to a shared mission, and galvanized ourselves to turn our upsetting encounters in Israel into action, so that unrelenting hope and optimism can be transformed into an enduring reality. Am Yisrael Chail!

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom Rabbi Pini Dunner



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

MICHAEL BAUM

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Need Piano Lessons?

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Yoni and Lauren Chriqui and children  
Noam and Jonah

## 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

## Yahrtzeits

**Jacqueline Perl**

Jacqueline bat Yaakov a"h

Mother of

**Mark Perl**

Yahrtzeit - 19 Kislev

**Anne Gendis**

Chana Braina bat Yosef a"h

Mother of

**Steven Dorfman**

Yahrtzeit - 20 Kislev

**Sylvia Kellerman**

Sima bat Avraham a"h

Mother of

**Hillel Kellerman**

**Jonathan Kellerman**

Yahrtzeit - 23 Kislev

**David Ben-Nathan z"l**

Father of

**Laurette Ben-Nathan**

Yahrtzeit - 23 Kislev

**Rita Gerson**

Rachel Leah bat Yishayahu a"h

Mother of

**Nadine Gerson**

Yahrtzeit - 25 Kislev

Thank You to **Dr. Susan**

**Graysen** for sponsoring next  
week's parsha shiur, in  
memory of her grandmother,  
**Miral Kahnowitz, Miral bat**  
**Judah Lav a"h**, whose  
yahrtzeit is on the 23rd of  
Kislev.



## 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 [yinhb.org/keilim](http://yinhb.org/keilim)

יחידת YINBH  
BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE

## SUPPORT ISRAEL

As soon as the news hit over Shemini Atzeret about the Hamas massacre in Southern Israel, our community swung into action and has donated countless hours and resources to ensuring that IDF soldiers and displaced communities are taken care of, and all their needs addressed. We have already raised significant funds of money to be distributed in Israel and we urge you to continue supporting our fundraising efforts.

Please use the link below to make a donation to help Israel at this difficult time. Please be generous with your support. Every dollar raised will be used to fund the critical needs of the communities that were decimated by Hamas terrorists during the massacre. Each recipient will be personally vetted by Rabbi Dunner to ensure that every dollar gets to where it is most needed.



## DONATE NOW

[WWW.YINBH.ORG/ISRAEL](http://WWW.YINBH.ORG/ISRAEL)

You can also mail checks to  
9261 Alden Drive, Beverly Hills, 90210

310-276-7650

[office@yinhb.org](mailto:office@yinhb.org)

[www.yinhb.org](http://www.yinhb.org)



### Young Israel Of North Beverly Hills Invites You To:

Join us for a special talk and Kiddush this Saturday Parshat Vasyishlach as we welcome:

### Special Sergeant Avi Komarchero & Major Nir Jonas

of "Yamam" - Israel's National Counter Terror Unit

Major Nir Jonas will address the congregation at 11:30 AM after davening, followed by a kiddush

### Thank You To Philip and Janice Kaufler

For hosting our guests and sponsoring the kiddush in support of Israel and in memory of the fallen members of Yamam & IDF killed during the Oct. 07 attacks.



יהי זכרם ברוך



יחידת YINBH  
BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE

SOHACHESKI FAMILY CENTER  
Chai Lifeline  
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### This Chanukah

# GIVE THE GIFT OF HOPE



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a Child Living  
With Illness

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B"H

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BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE  
PRESENTS

# EREWHONUKKAH

A Chanukah Party featuring:  
The first ever Erewhon inspired kosher pop-up!



Interactive "HitLit" Menorah arcade competition

Make Craft Chanukah Chocolates

with @littlefoodiesla



Glow In The Dark Paint Party with @sheinasart

Dreidel Hold'em Tournament

(for adults) benefitting a Chanukah Party for soldiers in the IDF



DJ Jacob • Babysitting/Softplay • Menorah Lighting

- Signature Smoothies
- Wine Bar (adults)
- Soup & Salad Stations
- Kids Buffet + Donut Spread
- Artisanal Latka + Toppings Bar

EREWHONUKKAH EREWHONUKKAH EREWHONUKKAH EREWHONUKKAH

Couvert:

Adult: \$45

Children (Over 3) \$25

At The Door Pricing: Adult \$60 Child \$35

THURSDAY DECEMBER 07 • 5 PM

RSVP: [YINBH.ORG/CHANUKAH](https://YINBH.ORG/CHANUKAH)