

# Tefilla Notebook

11 Tevet • Vayigash

December 22-23, 2023

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



Dear Members and Friends,

The late Elie Wiesel recounted a stirring Hasidic legend to illustrate the insidious and ever-mutating scourge of antisemitism. The evocative story unfolds in a dimly lit inn late one night, where two revered Hasidic masters, Rebbe Elimelekh of Lizhensk, and his brother, Reb Zushya of Anipoli, are both immersed in their Torah studies, their faces illuminated by flickering candlelight as they delve into the sacred texts.

This tranquil scene is shattered when a group of drunken antisemites burst in. Their raucous laughter and uncouth conversation suddenly goes quiet as they spot the two rabbis studying quietly in the corner. Without warning, they unleash their fury on the hapless Reb Zushya, who is subjected to a vicious and relentless beating. The attack is unexpected and brutal, but Reb Zushya endures it in stoic silence, until eventually he collapses unconscious on the floor, and the assailants momentarily go off to find another drink, their craving for violence temporarily satiated.

In these few fleeting moments of respite, Rebbe Elimelekh, moved by a profound sense of empathy and brotherly love, gently shifts his brother to where he had been sitting at the table and positions himself in Reb Zushya's place on the floor, so that he will bear the burden of suffering on his brother's behalf when the antisemites return. But his act of self-sacrifice goes unnoticed by the returning drunkards. In their alcohol-fueled daze, they fail to recognize the switch, and once again direct their cruelty towards Reb Zushya – who is now seated at the table – thinking that he is the other rabbi, and inflicting yet further pain on the innocent sage.

Wiesel, with his unique brand of irony and insight, observes that this tale is emblematic of the broader narrative of Jewish history, serving as a potent metaphor for the relentless and often irrational nature of antisemitism. The story poignantly underscores the futility faced by Jews as they attempt to evade persecution, revealing how, despite efforts to change and adapt in order to protect themselves, they have historically been confronted with persistent hostility and violence in whatever guise they have chosen.

I've been thinking a lot about this story over the past few weeks, in particular because one of the most prominent aspirations behind the establishment of a Jewish state was to forge a sanctuary that could offer security and protection from persecution, not just in Israel but for Jews all over the world. The idea was that a new reality – namely, a country Jews could call their own after 2000 years of dispersion – would precipitate a change in Jewish fortunes. A strong, independent Israel would place the Jewish people on an equal footing with other peoples, fostering a sense of global parity and, ideally, mitigating the scourge of antisemitism. "Never Again!" became the slogan associated with a strong and secure Israel firmly within the family of nations.

But, as it turned out, Reb Zushya may have moved from his spot on the floor to a seat at the table, but all that happened was that he got beaten up at the table. Rather than this monumental change for Jews being the gamechanger which neutralized antisemitism, Israel's existence and actions have been leveraged by those who are drunk with antisemitism as the new justification for their prejudice, and for unleashing more violence against Jews – now called Zionists.

In fact, a critical aspect that is often overlooked in the discourse surrounding Israel and antisemitism is the conflation of the Israeli state's actions with Jews. I don't recall, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine last year, that Russians living in the West along with descendants of Russian immigrants were targeted by protesters sympathetic to the Ukrainian cause, and nor do I recall Russian Orthodox churches being daubed with swastikas – despite the frequent reports of horrific scenes of death and destruction in Ukraine.

And yet Jews are targeted, vilified, attacked, intimidated, ostracized, threatened with death, and accused of being murderers – British Jews in London, Australian Jews in Sydney, American Jews in New York, and French Jews in Paris – all because Israel is engaged in a war with Hamas in Gaza (after the war was initiated by Hamas attacking Israel). The facts speak for themselves: criticism of Israel's policies and military strategy has quickly morphed into undisguised antisemitic rhetoric that employs age-old stereotypes and conspiracy theories, and which calls for Israel's existence to be undone.

And again, I don't hear any calls for Russia to be undone as a country, or Syria, or Myanmar, or Zimbabwe, or Sudan – and the list goes on and on – even after tough images emerge from each of these countries or countries of their foes because of actions they have taken. Only Israel suffers the indignity of being called illegitimate. Which means that the line between political critique and ugly bigotry has become dangerously blurred.

The argument that "Anti-Zionism is Not Antisemitism" is a cornerstone mantra of many anti-Israel groups, who insist that all criticism of Israeli policies and Zionist ideology is entirely separate from antisemitic sentiments. But surely this distinction is undermined when we witness a marked increase in antisemitic incidents following the October 7th massacre. It all suggests that anti-Zionism either contributes to, or indeed serves as a pretext for, antisemitic attitudes and actions, challenging the clear-cut separation anti-Israel groups claim to uphold.

Then there is the shocking lack of reaction by progressive groups to allegations of violence against Israeli women by Hamas on October 7th, compared to their vocal support for victims of sexual violence during the #MeToo moment. Where was the outrage for Israeli women? And how can that lack of outrage be explained as not being antisemitic? The answer is: it can't.

And who can fail to be struck by the inconsistency among academics and progressives, always eager to recognize and address microaggressions and prevent subtle forms of discrimination – a diligence that conveniently lapsed when it came to overt aggressions and discrimination against Jews after October 7th, particularly but not exclusively in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Is this not blatant antisemitism? The answer is: yes, it is.

The humanitarian outcry over the treatment of children in conflict zones, such as the concern for migrant children at the U.S. border, and the regular reminders regarding Palestinian children killed and injured by the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, contrasts sharply with the complete lack of interest in Israeli children murdered by Hamas on October 7th, and in the kidnapped children held by Hamas in dank underground tunnels with almost no food and water. Are Jewish children less important than non-Jewish children? It would appear so.

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## FRIDAY, DEC 22

4:30 PM CANDLELIGHTING  
4:35 PM KABBALAT SHABBAT

## SATURDAY, DEC 23

8:30 AM GEMARA SHIUR  
9:15 AM SHACHARIT  
4:35 PM MINCHA  
5:25 PM MAARIV  
5:30 PM SHABBAT ENDS

## WEEKDAY DAVENING

Sun	8:00am	4:35pm
Mon- Thur	7:00am	4:35pm
Fri	7:00am	4:35pm

**BRING THEM HOME NOW**

## THANK YOU

Seudah Shlishit this week is sponsored by **David & Gloria Frankel** in memory of David's mother, **Chaya Frankel, Chaya Gitel Shprintza bat Dovid a"h**, whose yahrtzeit was on the 4th of Tevet

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This week it was revealed that UNICEF – whose role it is to look after all children in need, wherever they are around the world – has no fund in place for Israeli children affected by the Hamas attacks. This, despite the fact that so many have been orphaned, and thousands are displaced and severely traumatized.

No less striking is the irreconcilable contradictions in the narratives propagated by those who condemn Israel. On the one hand the October 7th massacre never happened say Hamas spokesmen and their Western supporters, while on the other hand Hamas leaders promise that October 7th massacres against Israelis (and Jews) will be repeated again many times in the future. Hamas spokesmen and their Western supporters claim that nobody was beheaded on October 7th, but then we see videos taken by Hamas operatives showing them beheading people. We are told that all the victims on October 7th were killed by IDF “friendly fire”, but the videos clearly show Hamas terrorists shooting Israeli victims dead. And so it goes on. Lie after lie. Inconsistency after inconsistency. It is so incredibly infuriating, and it never seems to end.

A remarkable Midrash on Parshat Vayigash reflects on the moment when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. This Midrash draws a profound lesson about judgment and rebuke from the dramatic biblical scene, declaring “Woe to us from the day of judgment, woe to us from the day of rebuke,” after noting that when Joseph revealed his true identity, his brothers are struck with fear and were unable to respond. If such was the reaction to Joseph’s revelation, says the Midrash, how

much more intense will be the ultimate Divine rebuke, when every individual is confronted with the truth of their actions?

The celebrated mussar giant, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Chasman, explores a puzzling question arising out of this Midrash: What exactly was the rebuke that Joseph gave his brothers? On the surface, Joseph appears to comfort and reassure his brothers, not rebuke them. Rabbi Chasman explains that the very act of Joseph revealing himself and saying “I am Joseph” was itself a profound and terrifying rebuke. It forced the brothers to come face to face with the error of their ways over the past 22 years, from their initial irrational jealousy of Joseph, to the sale into slavery, to the pain they caused their father – and all because they had fallen into the trap of unjustified bias, which resulted in them embracing a false narrative and perpetuating self-serving lies. In that moment of Joseph’s revelation, their misjudgments and mistakes were laid bare, as they realized that their actions had not been driven by righteousness, but by hatred and prejudice.

In Rabbi Chasman’s reading, the Midrash reveals an eternal truth – that hatred which hides behind feigned righteous virtue will ultimately exposed for what it is: hatred, pure and simple. Just as Joseph’s brothers were eventually forced to confront the reality of their own bigotry when Joseph told them who he was, so too, in the fullness of time, all Jew-hating bigots who claim to oppose Israel for humanitarian reasons will be confronted with the harsh truths of their warped beliefs and their immoral actions.

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Pini Dunner

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**HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY**

MOOSSA LARI

KARLA LARI

ELIEZER  
ZUCKER

ETHAN RUIMY

EDWARD  
CZUKER

SHLOMO DUNNER

DANIEL KRAMER

DALIA WIZMAN

SAMUEL  
SCHLESINGER

KEVIN  
BERENSON

**Yahrtzeits**

**Eve Fine**

Chava bat Mordechai a"h

Mother of

**Richard Fine**

Yahrtzeit - 12 Tevet

**Ruth Weston a"h**

Mother of

**Richard Weston**

Yahrtzeit - 13 Tevet

**Lawrence Einfeld**

Eliyahu ben Hechaver Mordechai z"l

Grandfather of

**Carly Einfeld**

Yahrtzeit - 13 Tevet

**Hedy Orden**

Chana bat Chaim a"h

Mother of

**Helen Sassover**

Yahrtzeit - 17 Tevet

**Happy Anniversary**

*John & Sherri Fogelman*

*Michael & Jennifer Halimi*

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Statements have been emailed to everyone with an outstanding invoice. Please make sure to pay any open balances to the Synagogue before the end of the year. You can log-in to your account at [beverlyhillssynagogue.org](http://beverlyhillssynagogue.org) or call 310-276-7650



 **YINBH**  
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# TARGET PRACTICE

**January 8th, 2024 at 6pm**

Location is in the San Fernando Valley and  
address will be given upon confirmation of RSVP.



Only for those with prior gun  
experience.



\$100 per person includes  
ammunition, targets, and gun  
lane. Gun rentals are available  
for an extra charge

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# SOLIDARITY TRIP TO ISRAEL



## 3 DAY MISSION

**TUESDAY JANUARY 23- THURSDAY JANUARY 25**

### TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Dedication ceremony of YINBH Nahal Haredi apartment**

Visit wounded IDF soldiers  
in the hospital, with gifts

Visit kibbutzim affected by  
the October 7th massacres

Host a BBQ for soldiers  
at an army base

Meet with released  
hostages and their families

Volunteer with packing and  
distributing essential needs

Meet with government  
officials & dignitaries

### **COST: \$1200 PER PERSON**

PARTICIPANTS WILL ARRANGE THEIR OWN TRAVEL  
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Includes transportation within  
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Questions? Email [carly@yinhb.org](mailto:carly@yinhb.org) or call the office on (310) 276-7650