

Tefilla Notebook

6 Shevat • Parshat Bo

January 27-28, 2023

Steven Dorfman, President

• Rabbi Pini Dunner, Senior Rabbi

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Dear Members and Friends,

The great Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), whose range of talents and career highlights remain as dazzling now as when he lived, was a man of exceptional character. At the age of 20 he aspired to moral perfection, and prepared a list of thirteen virtues he felt would make him an ideal man. Throughout his long life, Franklin worked on perfecting these virtues, with varying degrees of

success, later acknowledging that he was "incorrigible" and that "it is easier to prevent bad habits than to break them."

The harsh reality is that bad habits are an inescapable part of the human condition. For as long as human intellect has been concerned with calculated self-improvement, the hurdle of identifying and conquering bad habits has been high on the agenda. We are all acutely aware of the phenomenon – and whether we are comfortable admitting to our bad habits or not, we all know what they are, and would love to see them off, one way or another.

Over the past 150 years, with the introduction of a range of social science disciplines dealing with human behavior, and a proliferation of carefully vetted social psychology experiments, our understanding of bad habits and how to address them has vastly improved. But in a field where hundreds of studies have furnished us with valuable information, there is one particular "discovery" vis-à-vis bad habits that stands out above them all – although, remarkably, it was not until many decades had passed that this incredible revelation was accepted by mainstream social science professionals.

In May 1971, Republican congressman Robert Steele and Democrat congressman Morgan Murphy, both freshman members of the U.S. House of Representatives, visited Vietnam for an official visit. They came back with some very disturbing news: at least 15 percent of U.S. servicemen in Vietnam were hopelessly addicted to heroin. President Nixon was prompted into action and announced the creation of a special agency to fight drug abuse that would be run under his personal authority: The Special Action Office of Drug Abuse Prevention. The troubled life of this short-lived agency – it was quietly closed in June 1975 after Nixon had stepped down in disgrace – is vastly overshadowed by one relatively unknown aspect of its activities, the repercussions of which continued to reverberate long after its demise.

Nixon had been so shocked by the number of drug-addicted servicemen, that he ordered the new agency to conduct research into the progress of addicted servicemen once they returned home. Jerome Jaffe, a clinical psychiatrist, was appointed by Nixon to run the SAODAP office, and he, in turn, recruited a leading professor of sociology and psychiatry, Lee Robins, to help conduct the study, promising her unprecedented and unfettered access to the servicemen, in order to facilitate her work.

Robins immediately set up a system in which addicted servicemen were made to stay in Vietnam until they were fully weaned off heroin, after which they could return home. Back in the U.S., Robins kept tabs on them, collecting data at regular intervals. Incredibly, her research showed that the number of soldiers who became readdicted to heroin once they got back to the U.S. was 1 in 20, a startlingly low statistic.

Addiction professionals in the 1970s through the turn of the millennium

simply refused to accept Robins' data; their experience showed that addicts treated in the U.S. who then went home relapsed at a rate of around 90 percent. Robins was accused of lying, of being politically motivated, of being unprofessional – and her results were dismissed as irrelevant and phony. Fast forward half a century, and today Robins' study results are broadly accepted and the data she produced has been utterly vindicated.

The key to understanding this 180-degree change is the one critical element that differentiated the Vietnam addicts from U.S.-based addicts – the fact that almost none of the servicemen who took drugs in Vietnam had ever taken drugs in America. David Neal, a psychologist specializing in behavior change and human decision-making, explains that when a behavior is frequently repeated, especially if the person does it in the same setting, one can change what that person wants to do, but their behavior is unlikely to follow their intentions. That's because physical environments are often what shape human behavior.

"When [people] perform a behavior a lot – especially in the same environment, same sort of physical setting – they outsource the control of the behavior to the environment," Neal explains. But if they cease their bad habit in the place where that bad habit occurred, and then they relocate to a place where the bad habit has never previously occurred, the chances of a relapse are reduced exponentially. Robins insisted that the soldiers serving in Vietnam – who had become addicted to heroin while serving there – had to be drug-free in Vietnam, and only then would they be allowed to return home. And once they were home, all the location triggers that had prompted their drug-taking in Vietnam were absent, and recidivism became a non-issue.

It is this phenomenon that underscores a cryptic reference in Parshat Bo, that you might easily miss even if you know about it. As part of the instructions to the Israelites in anticipation of redemption from Egypt, Moses tells them (Ex. 12:21) **וְשָׁחֻת לָכֵן צֹאן לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתֵיכֶם וְשִׁחְטוּ הַפֶּסַח** – "Go, choose lambs for your families, and slaughter the Passover offering." Rashi comments that the first word, "mishchu", appears superfluous, but it isn't – it is there as an instruction for the Israelites to "draw themselves away from idolatry" before they "choose lambs" to be used in the service of God. The Israelite addiction to paganism had to be tackled and conquered in Egypt, in the very location where it had overwhelmed them, so that it would not affect them once they had relocated elsewhere.

According to Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neriah (1913-1995), this Rashi reveals just how hard it is to overcome bad habits and resist temptation. Even as the Jewish nation prepared for the Exodus, after months of open miracles and exhilarating expectation, they still had to deal with the possibility that they would relapse into paganism if they didn't address this "bad habit" before they left.

People are often defined more by their bad habits than by their good ones. As Benjamin Franklin put it, "your net worth to the world is usually determined by what remains after your bad habits are subtracted from your good ones." Avoiding triggers that result in bad habits coming to the fore is a key tool to ensure that they never define us, and that our life experience is as free from temptation as it can be. After all, "it is easier to prevent bad habits than to break them."

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



FRIDAY, JANUARY 27

5:00pm CANDLELIGHTING
5:05pm SERVICES

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28

8:30 am GEMARA SHIUR
9:15 am SHACHARIT
5:05 pm MINCHA
5:55 pm MAARIV
6:00 pm SHABBAT ENDS

WEEKDAY DAVENING

Sun 8:00am 5:05pm
Mon-Thu 7:00am 5:05pm
Fri 7:00am 5:10pm

THANK YOU

This week's Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Faramarz & Sheila Sadeghi in memory of Faramarz's father, Daniel Sadeghi, Daniel ben Yaakov z"l, whose yahrtzeit is on the 7th of Shevat.

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January / February

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Save the Date!

Shiur with Rabbi Ari Kahn

Reflections on 40 years in Israel

- The Change from "Modern Orthodox" to "Religious Zionist"

A senior lecturer in Jewish Studies at Bar-Ilan University

An inspiring and phenomenal speaker!

Tuesday, February 7th at 7:00 pm

Signup at www.yinbh.org/arikahn

Shabbat Shalom,

Cecile & Ruthie

Sisterhood Co-Presidents



Daniel Sadeghi

Daniel ben Yaakov z"l

Father of

Faramarz Sadeghi

Yahrtzeit - 7 Shevat

Chana Gromis

Chana bat Moshe Yehudah
HaCohen a"h

Mother of

Ed Gromis

Yahrtzeit - 7 Shevat

Magda Weiss

Shayndal bat Moshe a"h

Mother of

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Yahrtzeit - 10 Shevat

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

Shaindle Gutman

Shaindle Gittle bat Chaim

Shaul a"h

Sister of

Aaron Fuchs

Aunt of

Jason Fuchs

Yahrtzeit - 11 Shevat

Marvin Bernstein

Menachem ben Yechiel z"l

Brother of

Barbara Bernstein

Yahrtzeit - 11 Shevat

Moshe Samuel

Moshe ben Yaakov z"l

Brother of

Joe Samuel

Yahrtzeit - 12 Shevat

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sarah Soroudi

Rita Miller

Donald Feder

Michael Tanenbaum

Sheilagh Sadeghi

Debby Fehner

Naomi Prero

Aiden Samuel

Jamie Beer

Leo Ring

Georgette Dunst

Aaron Fuchs

Karen Fisher

Mazel Tov

Zach Dorfman

on his
engagement to
Dalia Frank.

Mazel Tov to
parents **Steve &
Vivian Dorfman**



Next week's Parsha Shiur
is Sponsored by

**Aaron and Lillian Fuchs
and Jason Fuchs** in

memory of Aaron's sister
and Jason's aunt,

**Shaindle Gutman,
Shaindle Gittle bat**

Chaim Shaul a"h, whose
yahrtzeit is on the 11th of
Shevat

**REFLECTIONS ON 40 YEARS
IN ISRAEL:
THE CHANGE FROM
"MODERN ORTHODOX" TO
"RELIGIOUS ZIONIST"**

7th February, 2023 | 7pm

**YINBH - 9261 ALDEN DR
BEVERLY HILLS, 90210**

Rabbi Ari Kahn is Director of the One Year Overseas Student Program at Bar-Ilan University, where he is a senior lecturer in Jewish Studies. He lives in Givat Ze'ev, where he serves as Rabbi of the Mishkan Etrog community. Rabbi Kahn received his rabbinic ordination from Yeshiva University, where he studied with Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik and Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, and where he completed a BA in Psychology and an MS in Talmud. He has authored Thirteen books on Jewish thought including the highly acclaimed Echoes of Eden series, and the best seller "The Crowns on the Letters".



**RABBI
ARI
KAHN**



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**SAVE
THE
DATE
PURIM SEUDA
TUESDAY MARCH 7TH, 2023
DETAILS COMING SOON**

WELCOMES



**Yaakov
Katz**

Editor in Chief,
Jerusalem Post

Shabbat 11th March 2023

Yaakov will address the community at 11:00am

Services will be followed by a Kiddush Luncheon

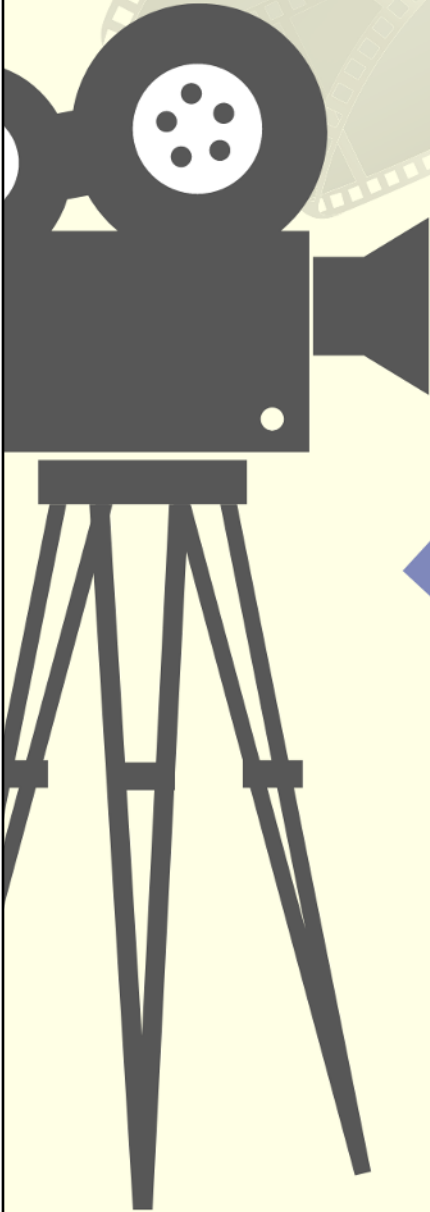
Yaakov Katz is Editor-in-Chief of The Jerusalem Post and author of "Shadow Strike - Inside Israel's Secret Mission to Eliminate Syrian Nuclear Power", which tells the inside story behind Israel's bombing of a nuclear reactor in Syria in 2007. Katz is also the co-author of "Weapon Wizards - How Israel Became a High-Tech Military Superpower" and "Israel vs. Iran: The Shadow War". "Weapon Wizards" has been published in English, Hebrew, Czech, Polish and Chinese.

Katz served for close to a decade as the paper's military reporter and defense analyst and was a faculty member and lecturer at Harvard University where he taught an advanced course in journalism. He also served as correspondent for Jane's Defence Weekly in Israel for five years.

Prior to taking up the role of Editor-in-Chief, Katz served for two years as a senior policy adviser to Israel's Minister of Economy and Minister of Diaspora Affairs.

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