## Tefilla Notebook

This week's Tefilla Notebook is sponsored by **Richard & Judith Weston** in memory of Richard's mother, Ruth Weston a"h, whose yahrtzeit is on the 13th of Tevet.

14 Tevet • Parshat Veyechi

January 6-7, 2023

Steven Dorfman, President

Rabbi Pini Dunner, Senior Rabbi

Nati Bar-Am, Chazan

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Dear Members and Friends,

By anyone's standards, the creation of the State of Israel is one of the most extraordinary events of modern history. Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927), a founding father of the Zionist project, cautioned early on against an accelerated campaign for a Jewish state because he feared that Jewish immigration to Palestine would never correlate to the needs and expectations of Zionism's political aspirations,

which was why it was preferable to have a solid population foundation before contemplating statehood.

How wrong he was. In 1894, census records show that there were just 43,000 Jews living in Palestine. By 1922, the Jewish population had reached 84,000 Jews, and in 1931 - less than a decade later - that number had already more than doubled, to 175,000. In 1939, on the eve of the Second World War, the number of Jews in Palestine had climbed to 449,000, and in 1947, the last year before Israel formally declared its independence, there were 630,000 Jews.

Once Israel was established as a country, the floodgates were opened, and Jews came to the country in ever-increasing numbers. But whereas Jewish immigration had previously been the purview of non-Jewish authorities, after 1948 it was a Jewish government that determined who was entitled to come into Israel as an immigrant. And there was a whole new dimension - being Jewish meant you were automatically entitled to Israeli citizenship.

Initially, Jewish status was defined by halakha (Jewish religious law). The 1950 Law of Return enshrined the right of any "Jew" to be allowed the right to immigrate to Israel, and the default rubric was the religious laws that had been hallowed over centuries by guardians of Jewish tradition. But that all changed in 1970, when the Law of Return was amended. From then on, anyone who would have been considered Jewish enough for the Nazis to murder as Jews was entitled to Israeli citizenship as a Jew. The conditions for a Jewish "right of return" were extended to include anyone with at least one Jewish grandparent, and anyone married to a Jew.

This widening of the net was adopted with the highest ideals in mind namely, to accommodate Jewish immigrants escaping oppression in the Soviet Union, many of whom were from families that included gentiles. But it hardly needs to be said that this definition of "who is a Jew?" was and remains a far cry from the traditional classification of Jewishness. Of course, the majority of those who have immigrated into Israel since its founding, even since 1970, have been Jews as defined by the millennia-old laws which have held the Jewish people together, even as every other

aspect of Jewish existence militated against Jewish survival.

To be clear, the Law of Return cuts to the heart of what both Judaism and modern Israel are all about. After 2,000 years of bitter exile, the Law of Return brought to life the prophecies of a Jewish return to the Land of Israel - prophecies heard by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the book of Genesis, and shared by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. And these same prophecies illuminated the darkest moments of Jewish history, via Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, all of whom predicted the miraculous return of Jews from every point on the globe to the land of their heritage - Israel.

No one can deny that the constant flow of Jewish immigration into Israel has been a modern-day miracle. Israelis - and every Jew around the world - love and cherish the immigrants, and feel grateful and blessed that so many have chosen to make Israel their home. As for immigrants who don't meet halakhic Jewish identity criteria, but have already become Israeli citizens, they should lovingly be brought closer to Judaism and then converted according to halakha. Indeed, this should be a primary priority for Israel.

But - and here is the rider! - there is no such thing as a blank check. Every country has laws on their lawbooks that made sense at some point in their history, but which no longer make any sense today. From the 1970s through the 1990s, the needs of those seeking to escape the Soviet Union, and the dreadful mess that followed its collapse, were intense. But it is now more than 30 years since the collapse of the Iron Curtain - surely anyone who truly felt an affinity for the Jewish people and their country, so strongly that they sought to immigrate to Israel, has already done so.

Shockingly, over the past few years the percentage of immigrants relying on the grandparent clause has risen to over 50%. That number speaks for itself. Israel is no longer a country of refuge for immigrants escaping persecution, rather it has become an attractive option for those seeking economic betterment. It is also a fact that many of these immigrants become citizens and then immediately move back to FSU countries while taking advantage of the benefits they receive as Israelis.

Those who voted for the 1970 amendment never imagined a scenario in which Israel's economic status would become so attractive that gentiles would take advantage of it to gain Israeli citizenship. In 1970, with Israel still a struggling economy and surrounded by countries hellbent on its destruction, gentiles admitted into Israel under the amendment were few and far between. Fast forward more than 50 years, and everything has changed.

To illustrate the preposterous nature of this unintended loophole: it has now become possible for dozens of people from one family, none of whom have ever considered themselves Jewish, nor will they be considered

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 6 4:41pm CANDLELIGHTING 4:45pm SERVICES

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7 8:30 am GEMARA SHIUR 9:15 am SHACHARIT 4:50 pm MINCHA 5:40 pm MAARIV 5:41 pm SHABBAT ENDS

#### **WEEKDAY DAVENING**

8:00am 4:45pm Sun Mon-Thurs7:00am 4:45pm 7:00am 4:50pm

#### **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Igor & Lisa Korbatov

#### **MAZAL TOV**

Daniel Strum on the publication of his first children's book "Banana Court -Case 1: The Case of the Bad Apples!"



Marilyn & Jaime Sohacheski on the engagement of their grandson Shlomo Brothman, son of Rabbi Dovid and Jasmine of Ramat Eshkol on his engagement to Tzivia Walkin of Lakewood, daughter of Aaron and Gitty Walkin. Granddaughter of Rav Chaim Wilkin z"l and Henny Walkin.

**THANK YOU** Next week's Parsha Shiur is sponsored by Shawney & Richard Fine in memory of Shawney's Father, Joseph Wagner, HaRav Yosef Chaim ben Eliyahu z"l, whose yahrtzeit is on the 22nd of Tevet.

Jewish upon arrival in Israel, to qualify for Israeli residence and citizenship simply because the family patriarch or matriarch, possibly already in their 80s or 90s, had a single Jewish grandparent – a grandparent who has been dead for half a century or more! As a result, the entire extended family is granted an automatic "right of return", along with their spouses and children – not one of whom is Jewish, or has the slightest interest in becoming Jewish. Which means that this is no longer a grandparent clause, it is a great- grandparent clause – and it is utterly absurd.

The continued flow of so many non-Jews into the "Jewish" state greatly complicates the demographic, cultural, statistical, and political landscape of Israel. According to Professor Sergio Della Pergola, an Italian-born Israeli demographer and statistician, in 2021 there were at least 18 million individuals around the world entitled to Israeli citizenship – with all the financial benefits that come with it – of whom a whopping 54% are not Jewish. Meanwhile, in FSU countries, that figure is much higher; the proportion of non-Jews eliqible for aliya is 76%.

Most Israelis, whether they are secular or religious, believe that Israel must have historical and spiritual continuity. Experience has demonstrated that such continuity can only be provided by Jewish tradition, and by Jewish identity that is determined by Jewish tradition. Like it or not, Israel has a duty to ensure the future of the Jewish people. The biggest tragedy for Israel would be if it had to endure the shocking rates of assimilation and intermarriage that are the norm for Jews outside Israel. Which is why,

if non-Jewish immigration into Israel continues unchecked, the dangers that lie ahead for Jewish continuity are incalculable.

At the beginning of Parshat Vayechi, Joseph visits his father Jacob together with his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. At that fateful meeting Jacob gives Joseph's sons one of the most powerful blessings of Jewish history – so powerful that the words of his blessing are used to bless Jewish children to this day (Gen. 48:20): בְּדָּ יִבְרֵדִּ יִשְׁרָאֵלְ לָאמֹר יִשְׁלְהָּ אֱלֹקִים בְּאָלְרִים וְּכְבְנִישְׁה - "By you shall Israel invoke blessings, saying: God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh." Jacob was overwhelmed by the fact that Joseph's children possessed such a powerful Jewish identity, despite having been brought up in an Egyptian palace surrounded by pagans. The biggest blessing anyone can have, Jacob said, is for their grandchildren to be true to the heritage of their grandparents – hence, "may every Jewish grandchild be like Ephraim and Manasseh!"

The current iteration of the Law of Return has it backwards. Rather than focusing on why grandchildren must stay true to their Jewish heritage and be a reflection of their ancestors, it totally dismisses Jewish tradition and identity as the most crucial component of Jewish continuity. And that is why the "grandchild clause" must be scrapped at the earliest possible opportunity.

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

# January Thank You!

Thanks to our many members who donated generously to this year's Annual Toy Drive benefiting Chai Lifeline

making it a huge success!

#### Stay Dry and Read On!

We will be reading *And After the Fire* by Lauren Belfer

Winner of the National Jewish Book Awards

The book is available for purchase on Amazon

Tuesday, January 17th at 7:30 pm

Private home address will be provided upon RSVP

Get ready for an interesting discussion!

Shabbat Shalom,

Cecile & Ruthie

Sisterhood Co-Presidents



#### **Hedy Orden**

Chana bat Chaim a"h Mother of

**Helen Sassover** 

Yahrtzeit - 17 Tevet

#### **Donna Michelle Gross**

Rachel Daniella bat Moshe a"h Sister of

**Jeffrey Gross** 

Yahrtzeit - 19 Tevet

#### Helen Baum

Miriam Henia bat Yechezkel Yaakov HaLevi a"h

Mother of

Michael Baum Anna Baum Roberta Kimmel

Yahrtzeit - 19 Tevet

#### Jacobo Cohenca

Yaakov ben Shabtai z"l Father of

**Victor Cohenca** 

Yahrtzeit - 19 Tevet

#### Paul Feder z"l Gemara Shiur

לע"נ פנחס אליהו בן שמשון הלוי

Join Rabbi Dunner for his Gemara Shiur on Shabbat and Yom Tov 45 minutes before Shachariit

Happy Anniversary

Michael & Fariba Naim

#### HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Ezra Kest Lauren Kest Caroline Azouz

Rose Kemps

Daniel Paluch
Michael Schloss

Ronnie Schwartz

### THANK YOU LETTER FROM CHAI LIFELINE WEST COAST TO YINBH BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE

Young Israel of North Beverly Hills 9261 Alden Drive Beverly Hills, CA 90210



Dear YINBH Members:

The YINBH community has done it again – our office is overflowing with toys! On behalf of our children and families, thank you for so generously participating in the annual Chanukah Toy Drive benefitting Chai Lifeline.

We greatly appreciate the large variety of toys you purchased for us through our Amazon Wish List. Our staff had the pleasure of distributing many of these toys over Chanukah. It was wonderful to see the excitement on the children's faces as they received their gifts and to hear from their parents how touched they were by the outpouring of support. Thanks to your generosity, we restocked our toy room with the remainder of the toys and will use them throughout the year for hospital care packages, pick-me-up gifts and birthday presents for children whose lives are overshadowed by illness or loss.

Thank you again for being partners in our work and for bringing the gift of happiness to our children.

Sincerely,

Randi Grossman West Coast Director





### BOOK GROUP EVENT

•LAUREN BELFER



"And After The Fire"

Tuesday, January 17th at 7:30pm

RSVP at <a href="mailto:yinbh.org/bookgroup">yinbh.org/bookgroup</a>





WIZO CALIFORNIA

# LITERARY SALON

EVENT

FEATURING

Comedian & Author Mark Schiff

IN CONVERSATION WITH SHIRIN YADEGAR FOUNDER OF LA MOM MAGAZINE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18TH, 2023 | 10:30AM YOUNG ISRAEL NORTH BEVERLY HILLS

TICKETS: \$54

(BOOK INCLUDED FOR FIRST 50 SIGN UPS)
FREE FOR 2023 WIZO BOARD MEMBERS

GENEROUSLY HOSTED BY

IRENE SIREBRENIK, KAREN SIREBRENIK & GINA RAPHAEL



FOR QUESTIONS OR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT WIZO CALIFORNIA AT 323.206.6403 OR DIRECTOR@WIZOCALIFORNIA.ORG.



NEXT SHABBAT

BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGU YOUNG ISRAEL OF NORTH BEVERLY HILLS

## GUEST SPEAKER

Shabbat 14th January 2023

## Rabbi Raphael Zarum

Dean of the London School of Jewish Studies

Rabbi Dr. Zarum will address the community at 11:00am The service will be followed by a Kiddush Luncheon

**SPONSORED** BY:

Maggie & Michael Bayer in Ed & Cecile Gromis in memory of Maggie's mother, Bella Magenhaim, mother, Chana Gromis, Helen's mother, Hedy Bayla bat Shmuel a"h, whose yahrtzeit is on the Yehudah HaCohen a"h, 22nd of Tevet

memory of Ed's Chana bat Moshe the 7th of Shevet

Helen & Moshe Sassover in memory of Orden, Chana bat Chaim a"h, whose whose yahrtzeit is on yahrtzeit is on the 17th of Tevet

David & Caroline Azouz in memory of David's father, Albert Azouz, z"l, whose yahrtzeit is on the 2nd of Shevat

Barbara Bernstein in memory of her father, Isadore Bernstein, Yechiel ben Yitzchak z"l, whose Abraham ben Isaac vahrtzeit is on the 25th of Tevet

Vera Markowitz in memory of her husband, Harold Tzvi ben Yitzchak z"l, whose vahrtzeit is on the 22nd of Tevet

Marilyn & Jaime Sohacheski in memory of Marilyn's mother, Markowitz, Benjamin Florence Presser, Feige Neshe bat Binyamin HaCohen a"h, whose vahrtzeit is on the 27th of Tevet

Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum is Dean of the London School of Jewish Studies (LSJS) where he holds the Rabbi Sacks Chair of Modern Jewish Thought. Rabbi Dr. Zarum lectures extensively and regularly writes articles in the media and contributes scholarly essays for academic journals. He is an acclaimed speaker on a variety of topics who has travelled the globe lecturing at a wide range of Jewish institutions.

Rabbi Zarum will also be speaking during Kabbalat Shabbat on January 13th and Seudah Shlishit on Shabbat