

Tefilla Notebook

6-7 Sivan • Shavuot

May 25-27, 2023

Steven Dorfman, President

Rabbi Pini Dunner, Senior Rabbi

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Dear Members and Friends,

The renowned American writer and humorist, Mark Twain, is purported to have said "Action speaks louder than words, but not nearly as often." Or, as Benjamin Franklin put it so succinctly, "Well done is better than well said."

This exact sentiment seems to arise out of a strange Talmudic passage (Shabbat 88a)

describing the scene at Mount Sinai as the Torah was given. God threatens the Jewish people with annihilation if they don't agree to take on the precepts demanded of them: "God dangled the mountain over the Jews like a tub, and said to them: 'If you accept the Torah, excellent; but if not, you will be buried here.'" Tosafot ask the obvious question: hadn't the Israelites already expressed their unwavering acceptance of the Torah when they proclaimed Naaseh Venishma – "we shall do, we shall heed"? Why would God threaten them if they had made this unprompted commitment? The implication seems to be that God was unimpressed with their enthusiastic declaration – mere words, unsupported by action.

The passage is puzzling for other reasons. Why would holding a mountain over their heads and the threat of a grisly death solve the problem? Besides, God could have used this drastic solution later on, if it became evident that their commitment was slipping. And all of this raises another perplexing question: In a separate Talmudic passage (Avoda Zara 2b), the Gemara implies that God resorted to threatening the Israelites with the mountain precisely because they had proclaimed Naaseh Venishma. How does this make any sense?

According to Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel (Maharal of Prague; 1525-1609), the reason God held a mountain over the Israelites was to ensure that they could not later claim that they had initially accepted the Torah willingly, but then changed their minds. People often start out being enthusiastic about something, only to later change their minds, even if it means letting people down, or worse. One famous historical example is Benedict Arnold (1741-1801), a military officer during the American Revolutionary War who was a close friend of George Washington. He played a significant role, winning several crucial battles for the Continental Army, and his enthusiasm for the revolution earned him recognition and admiration. But despite this initial dedication to the cause, Arnold changed his allegiance in 1780 – mainly as a result of petty personal grievances – and betrayed his comrades. What began as secret correspondence with the British eventually resulted in him handing over the fort at West Point to the enemy. His ignoble treachery has marked Arnold as modern history's greatest flake.

But the Torah was and is far too valuable, and too essential, for it to be cast off as a passing fad – the entire world and universe literally depends on it. The Torah must be safeguarded and secured. And God needed to convey this critical message right from the get-go. The message of the mountain hovering over their heads was clear and unequivocal: the Israelites might find the Torah appealing and wonderful at the moment, but now they were bound to it for all time. The jarring life-or-death scenario was not because they had suddenly changed their minds; it was about creating an insurance policy for the universe. Now that they had expressed their desire for the Torah, it became crucial to ensure they understood the gravity of their

decision.

The perspective offered by the Tosafists suggests that the Israelites' initial acceptance of the Torah was fragile and vulnerable, lacking the resilience to withstand future challenges and difficulties. God's concern lay in the possibility of the Israelites abandoning the Torah at the first sign of adversity – or worse, betraying God for some new attraction. Merely expressing fondness for the idea of accepting the Torah at Mount Sinai did not guarantee their ability to endure the inevitable trials and tribulations that accompany a life devoted to serving God.

But all is not yet resolved. If God's intention was to ensure the enduring commitment of future generations, why would coercing the Jews into accepting the Torah at that specific time and place make any difference for their descendants in the distant future? After all, we all barely feel committed to our parents' and grandparents' values and ideals – why would we ever remain committed to ideals expressed by our ancestors in the very distant past? God's imposition of the Torah on the Israelites through force or coercion seems quite superficial and fails to take the long-term into account. How would this compelled acceptance impact the commitment and resilience of future generations who were not present to witness the dramatic scene at Mount Sinai?

For this reason, Rabbi Abraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook (1865-1935) offers a distinctive perspective that challenges the whole notion of choice when it comes to the Torah vis-à-vis the Jewish people. While as individuals we may have the freedom to make personal choices, and can declare Naaseh Venishma to our heart's content – or not! – when it comes to matters that concern the collective destiny of the Jewish people, this totally transcends personal discretion. The existence of the people of Israel and their profound connection to God are as essential and immutable as the laws of nature themselves – and can therefore never be left to our unreliable choices.

According to Rabbi Kook, although we do possess the capacity for individual choice in our own lives, and that choice is important, but when it pertains to the welfare and destiny of the nation, free choice ceases to be a factor. By dangling the mountain over their heads, God wished to impress upon the Jewish people for all time the devastating consequences of abandoning our collective commitment to the Torah and its eternal ideals. The Israelites' enthusiastic declaration of allegiance to the Torah had to be immediately augmented by a counterpoint conveying the chaos and obliteration that would ensue if the enthusiasm diminished, or worse – broke down completely.

Rabbi Kook's perspective is particularly relevant to Shavuot, our annual recommitment as a people to the Mount Sinai protocols. It highlights the profound intertwining of the Jewish people and the Torah, illustrating their inseparable nature. Without our shared understanding of the consequences of leaving the Torah behind, our future is bleak. Which is why – even as we reaffirm our love and enthusiasm for God and His Torah, we simultaneously acknowledge the shadow of Mount Sinai over our heads, stirring us all to secure a future for the world under God's guidance.

Wishing you a Chag Sameach, Shabbat Shalom, and a great week ahead,

Rabbi Pini Dunner

Thursday, May 25 - Erev Shavuot

7:00am Shacharit

7:30pm Mincha

7:37pm Candle Lighting

7:40pm Maariv

8:00pm Shavuot Dinner Followed by Learnathon

Friday, May 26 - Shavuot - 1st Day

No Gemara Shiur

9:00am Shacharit

6:15pm Shiur by Chabad Boys

7:00pm Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat

7:38pm Candle Lighting

Saturday, May 27 Shavuot - 2nd Day

8:15am Gemara Shiur

9:00am Shacharit

10:45am (Approx) Yizkor

7:45pm Mincha

8:05pm Seudah Shlishit

8:35pm Maariv

8:39pm Havdalah

WEEKDAY DAVENING

Sun & Mon 8:00am 7:45pm

Tues-Thu 7:00am 7:45pm

Fri 7:00am 6:30pm

Sisterhood Corner

On June 10th, YINBH will welcome **Melanie Phillips** as we celebrate a Shabbos of Womens' leadership, welcoming a voice of Modern Orthodoxy as we also recognize women leaders at home.

We would like to recognize **Cecile Gromis** & **Ruthie Kellerman**, outgoing Presidents of the Sisterhood.

A special thank you to **June Brenner**, **Judith Garshofsky**, **Nadine Gerson**, **Vera Markowitz**, **Rosalyn Rothman**, **Galina Samuel**, **Joanne Sacks**, **Irina Schaeffer**, and **Arleen Tanenbaum** for their past years' and future commitment to the Sisterhood.

We welcome everyone to join and support us in all of our upcoming events!

YINBH
SISTERHOOD

Summer Planning Dinner & Schmooze

Wednesday June 21st, 2023
6:30pm

\$36 Payable to the Shul

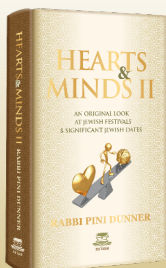
Bodhi Thai
9198 W Olympic Blvd
Beverly Hills, CA

COMING SOON

Hearts & Minds II

An Original Look at
Jewish Festivals &
Significant Jewish Dates

By Rabbi Pini Dunner



YAHRTZEITS



Yosef Goldberger

Yosef ben Yishayahu z"l
Father of

Ernie Goldberger

Yahrtzeit - 6 Sivan

Adina Goldberger

Adina bat Asher a"h
Mother of

Ernie Goldberger

Yahrtzeit - 6 Sivan

Shmuel Goldberger

Shmuel ben Yosef z"l
Brother of

Ernie Goldberger

Yahrtzeit - 6 Sivan

Baruch Goldberger

Baruch ben Yosef z"l
Brother of

Ernie Goldberger

Yahrtzeit - 6 Sivan

Jozef Goldberger

Jozef ben Yosef z"l
Brother of

Ernie Goldberger

Yahrtzeit - 6 Sivan

Latsi Fischmann

Chaim Yehudah ben Yaakov z"l
Father of

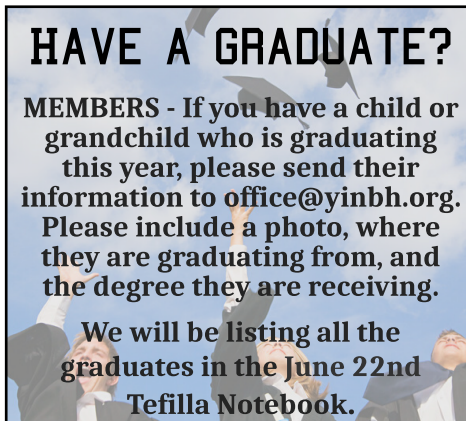
George Fischmann

Yahrtzeit - 12 Sivan

HAVE A GRADUATE?

MEMBERS - If you have a child or grandchild who is graduating this year, please send their information to office@yinh.org. Please include a photo, where they are graduating from, and the degree they are receiving.

We will be listing all the graduates in the June 22nd Tefilla Notebook.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Laurie Spencer

Susanne Czucker

Igor Korbatov

Katie Kest

Rabbi Alan Kalinsky

Jonathan Zucker

Nicole Schaeffer

Nadine Gerson

Nathaniel Roden

Jonathan Gromis

Devora Miller

Marty Feldberg

Sabine Dunner

Happy Anniversary

Stephen & Jessica Samuel

Simon & Rita Elhiani

Mark & Amy Kestenbaum

Philip & Janice Kaufler

Welcome to our guests from **Yeshivah Ohr Elchanon**, who will be joining us for the second year in a row to give a guest Shiur before Mincha on Friday Evening.

Meir Simcha Silberberg

Elchonon Orkin

Menny Novack

Moshe Rudnick

Yanky Shapiro



THANK YOU

We would like to thank everyone for the outpouring of phone calls, text messages and voicemails describing the joy and happiness that was experienced by all at this year's Banquet. The evening was magnificently designed and executed by our team of Carly, Marketa, and our daughter, Jesse. Mark Goldenberg is the Master of Ceremonies extraordinaire. His poise and stage presence added so much to this amazing event. There were so many special moments throughout the evening, enhanced by great food, spirits, and of course –Beatlemania! The speeches were heartfelt and eloquently delivered. Our profound gratitude to all those who attended the Banquet and made the event such a spectacular success. We would especially like to express our thanks to the Rothman family for allowing us to share the stage with a tribute to Stephen Rothman z"l. We should continue to have Simchas to share with our friends and family, and with our wonderful YINBH community.

Bill and Joan Lopatin

YINBH SISTERHOOD PRESENTS.... GUEST SPEAKER

SHABBAT OF WOMENS' LEADERSHIP JUNE 10TH, 2023

YINBH is pleased to welcome **Melanie Phillips** as we celebrate a Shabbat of Womens' leadership. We will be welcoming a voice of Modern Orthodoxy as we also recognize women leaders at home.



MELANIE
PHILLIPS

We would like to recognize **Cecile Gromis & Ruthie Kellerman**, outgoing Presidents of the Sisterhood.

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Melanie Phillips is a British journalist, broadcaster and author who has championed traditional values in the culture war for more than three decades. She writes a weekly column in The Times of London and Jewish News Syndicate, and regularly broadcasts on the BBC. Her first novel, The Legacy, which deals with conflicted Jewish identity, antisemitism and the power of history, was published in 2018 along with her personal and political memoir, Guardian Angel. You can follow Melanie's work at her website, melaniephillips.substack.com

Kiddush Following Services
Thank you to our Sponsors:

Barry & Laurelle Wolfe

Jeff Gross & Gina Raphael

Robert Zeller & Nadine Gerson in memory of Robert's Father, **Herbert Zeller, Hershel ben Lieb z"l**, whose yahrtzeit is on the 27th of Sivan; and in memory of Robert's mother **Reba Zella, Rivka bat Max a"l**, whose yahrtzeit is on the 3rd of Tammuz.

Annie Baum & Barry Novack in memory of Annie's father, **Fred Baum, Ephraim ben Elimelech z"l**, whose yahrtzeit is on the 24th of Sivan.

The Goldberger Family



In celebration of
Ernie Goldberger's
96th Birthday

עד מאה כעשרים שנה!