Dear Members and Friends,

You’ve been asked the question before. Are you a glass-half-full kind of person, or is your glass always half-empty? You might think to yourself – who cares? After all, what difference does it make one way or the other? Well, in August 2019 a remarkable study revealed that if your proverbial glass is always half-full, you are much more likely to live to a ripe old age than those people who think their glass is half-empty. The statistics are astounding: optimistic women are 50 percent more likely to live until at least the age of 85, and optimistic males are 70 percent more likely to live that long. In other words, a pessimist’s lifespan is profoundly affected – indeed, reduced – as a result of their negative disposition.

The lead researcher for the study was USC graduate Dr. Lewina Lee, assistant professor of psychiatry at Boston University School of Medicine. She is clearly a glass-half-full type, because rather than seeing the results of the study as depressing for pessimists, she told reporters that the findings “raise an exciting possibility that we may be able to promote healthy and resilient aging by cultivating psychosocial assets such as optimism.”

Lee and her team analyzed data from two other long-term research projects, one of them focused on a large number of female nurses and the other on a smaller group of men. The nurses were first evaluated for optimism in 2004; at the time they had an average age of 70. The men were first assessed for optimism in 1986, when their average age was 62, and deaths were recorded until 2016.

After splitting the more than 70,000 subjects into four roughly equal groups, based on how they scored for optimism, the research team then noted the lifespans of the most optimistic ones as compared to the lifespans of the least optimistic, while simultaneously accounting for other factors, such as age, race, education, income, and various physical, mental, and social health conditions. The study proved what has long been considered the case based on anecdotal evidence: positive people live longer and healthier lives. Yes, it’s true – not thinking the worst of every situation, or imagining the worst outcome, can actually increase your lifespan considerably.

The study’s co-author, Laura Kubzansky, Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Harvard School of Public Health, says that the reason for this extraordinary phenomenon is really quite simple: “more optimistic people [are more] able to regulate emotions and behavior, as well as bounce back from stressors and difficulties more effectively.” Or, as the Israel-born Nobel Prize-winning economist Daniel Kahneman put it so beautifully in his book Thinking Fast and Slow: “If you are genetically endowed with an optimistic bias, you hardly need to be told that you are a lucky person – you already feel fortunate.”

The corollary of optimism is that you eat better, you don’t suffer the negative consequences of anxiety and depression, and you actually feel like you want to live longer because you enjoy your life, even when things are undeniably challenging. And it occurred to me that this entire concept can help us understand a puzzling Midrash about Jacob and how old he was when he died.

When Jacob had his audience with Pharaoh after arriving in Egypt, the ruler of Egypt was quite shocked by Jacob’s very elderly and frail appearance and asked him how old he was (Gen. 47:8): כַּמָּה יְמֵי שְנֵי חַיֶיךָ – “Pharaoh said to Jacob, ‘how many years are the days of your life?’” Jacob explained that the reason he looked so frail and old was because he had experienced a very hard life. The Midrash comments that Jacob should have lived at least as long as his father, Isaac, who died at the age of 180. But Jacob died aged 147, a reduction of 33 years based on the number of words in this very exchange with Pharaoh as recorded in the portion of Vayigash. The medieval Tosafists explain that God reminded Jacob of all the times He had saved him from life-threatening and challenging experiences, with the implication that Jacob had nothing to complain about – after all Esau had not managed to kill him, Laban had not got the better of him, and in the end, Joseph had turned up alive and well as the viceroy of Egypt.

To be frank, this Midrash is absolutely bewildering. While it is true that God saved Jacob from Esau and Laban, and reunited him with Joseph, just because there is a happy ending does not diminish the trauma of the situation as it unfolds and before the happy ending has happened. The tension and anxiety take their toll, and one can hardly blame Jacob for mentioning it as an explanation for his very aged appearance.

But I think the Midrash is presenting us with the two approaches to life we mentioned earlier and highlighting the life-changing consequences of each. Isaac could hardly be said to have had an easy life – pointedly, he was the subject of a harrowing near-death experience at the hands of his father at the Akeida. But it would appear he was a glass-half-full kind of person, and always saw the bright side of life, resulting in his remarkable longevity. Meanwhile, his son Jacob was a worrier, and always took the glass-half-empty approach. His conversation with Pharaoh in Vayigash simply highlights this attitude, and the Midrash uses it as an opportunity to explain that this was why his lifespan was shorter than Isaac’s.

There is a quote often misattributed to Sir Winston Churchill, actually spoken by a long-forgotten British local politician, the mayor of Carlisle Bertram Carr, better known for his family’s eponymous biscuit company. In his 1919 keynote speech to a convention of social reformers, Carr addressed some of the great challenges they faced in achieving their utopian goals, telling delegates that they must: “view these [matters] in the spirit of the optimist to whom every difficulty is an opportunity, and not as the pessimist, to whom every opportunity presents some difficulty.” So true, and, as it turns out, your life may actually depend on it.

Wishing you Shabbat Shalom, and a great week ahead, 
Rabbi Pini Dunner
January
Our next Shiur & Schmooze
On Wednesday January 29, at 9am
Rosh Chodesh Shevat
Parshat Bo
Shiur with Rabbi Dunner
Followed by breakfast
Shabbat Shalom,
Cecile & Ruthie
Sisterhood Co-Presidents

Margaret Friedman
Miriam bat Mendel a"h
Mother of
Jerry Friedman
Yahrtzeit— 7 Tevet

Imre Schaeffer
Noach ben Moshe z”l
Father
George Schaeffer
Yahrtzeit— 8 Tevet

Shalom Herskovitz
Shalom ben Avraham z”l
Father of
Jonas Herskovitz
Yahrtzeit— 10 Tevet

Eve Fine
Chava bat Mordechai a”h
Mother of
Richard Fine
Yahrtzeit— 12 Tevet

Join Rabbi Dunner each
Wednesday morning at 9am for
the weekly ladies Parsha Shiur as he
explores the weekly Torah
portion through the eyes of the
classic commentators.
The next class will meet next on
Wednesday, January 8th 2019 at
9:00am

Thank you to Chavi Hertz for
sponsoring next week’s shiur
in memory of her father,
Yisroel David Mikel z”l,
whose yahrtzeit is on 9 Tevet

EXPLORING HALACHA
Join Nati Baram every
Shabbat afternoon 35
minutes before mincha as he
explores an interesting topic
of Jewish law with the aid
of ancient and
contemporary texts.

Join "Rabbi Dunner
Podcasts" WhatsApp
group. Email
office@yinbh.org to
receive the link to
join. You will receive
Rabbi Dunner’s
weekly shiur and
Dvar Torah podcasts.

ISRAEL HEADLINES
Each week, YINBH Beverly Hills
Synagogue produces a weekly
bulletin titled “Israel Headlines.” You
can find them on the tables in shul
every Shabbat. The idea behind this
is to make us aware of current
events in Israel. Sponsorship for Israel
Headlines is available for $100 per
issue. If you are interested in
sponsoring a weekly bulletin please
e-mail israelheadlines@gmail.com

THE SISTERHOOD PRESENTS
SHIUR & SCHMOOZE
ROSH CHODESH SHEVAT
PARSHAT BO
WEDNESDAY JANUARY 29TH
9AM SHIUR
10AM BREAKFAST
SHIUR WITH RABBI DUNNER
FOLLOWED BY BREAKFAST
There is no charge to attend. Please RSVP to office@yinbh.org
SPONSORED BY JUDITH GARSHOFSKY
& GALINA SAMUEL

YAHRTZEITS

Join Rabbi Dunner for his Gemara
shiur on Shabbat mornings 45
minutes before Shacharit.

Happy Anniversary
Jaime & Marilyn
Sohacheski

Paul Feder z”l
GEMARA
A”H

Israel Headlines
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receive the link to
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Shabbat afternoon 35
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of ancient and
contemporary texts.
An evening with
COLIN SCHACHAT & SONS
ISRAELS RENOWNED FAMILY ENSEMBLE
WITH SPECIAL GUEST CANTOR NETANEL BARAM

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF POPULAR MUSIC

Accompanied by
the LA International Chamber Orchestra
Conductor and Musical Director: Tomer Adaddi

Wednesday January 15th 2020, Time: 7:30pm
Beverly Hills Synagogue, 9261 Alden Drive Beverly Hills CA 90210

For Tickets: e-mail: concerts@yinbh.org • Phone: 310-276-7650 or at BeverlyHillsSynagogue.com
Ticket Prices: $35 (balcony), $70 (Rows), $105 (Preferred seating), $200 (includes pre-reception)

Monday Evening Study Group
WITH CHAZZAN NATI BARAM

The focus of the group is to explore halacha using a unique curriculum tool that was developed in Israel called Tzurah M’Rabanan. It is a systematic and concise learning method, from the Talmudic source through modern day Halachic application.

Following Mincha, approximately 5:15pm on Monday evenings

FOR MORE DETAILS EMAIL OFFICE@YINBH.ORG OR CALL (310) 276-7650

TEEN MINYAN
WITH CHAZZAN NATI BARAM

SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 1ST

Monthly Teen Minyan. Teen led services and participation.

Followed by a teen only kiddush catered by Jeff’s Gourmet

SHABBAT LUNCHEON
WITH AMERICA’S MOST CELEBRATED LAWYER
ALAN DERSHOWITZ
EMERITUS PROFESSOR, HARVARD LAW SCHOOL
AUTHOR OF “GUilty BY ACCUSATION”
& THE CASE AGAINST IMPEACHING TRUMP

Alan Dershowitz is America’s most famous civil liberties lawyer, and a frequent commentator on prominent contemporary legal cases. After his runaway 2003 bestseller “The Case for Israel,” Dershowitz became Israel’s most vigorous advocate in the US media, taking on media bias and antisemitic canards to defend the State of Israel against sustained media attacks.

ONE TIME OFFER FOR LUNCH GUESTS
“Guilty by accusation” (RSP $20), “The Case Against Impeaching Trump” (RSP $30) - The Impeachment Report (RSP $19)
All items for just $45
Save $50 off the latest Alan Dershowitz books, but only if you book for the lunch. All the books will be personally dedicated by Professor Dershowitz.
Advance Payment Required

SHABBAT
FEBRUARY 15, 2020
12PM
YINBH Beverly Hills Synagogue
9201 Alden Drive
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

TICKETS
$180 PER PERSON FOR MEMBERS
$250 FOR NON-MEMBERS
ADVANCE BOOKING REQUIRED

TO RESERVE
EMAIL RSVP@YINBH.ORG
CALL 310-276-7650 OR VISIT
BEVERLYHILLSYNAGOGUE.ORG
An Email correspondence between Rabbi Pini Dunner and Chief Sandra Spagnoli this week

Dear Chief Spagnoli,
I hope you are well.
No doubt you have heard about the dreadful attack at the rabbi’s house in Monsey NY last Saturday night.
Our synagogue community in particular, and the Jewish community in Beverly Hills in general, especially following the Nessah vandalism attack, and now the Monsey attack, are extremely alarmed by the rapid increase and ferocity of attacks against visible Jewish targets over the past few weeks. We believe that hostility towards Jews is crystallizing into violent attacks, and that we are extremely vulnerable to antisemitic violence, more so than at any moment in recent history.
With this in mind, we wish to respectfully ask that the Beverly Hills Police Department take this increased threat very seriously, and that you deploy extra police officers and patrol vehicles to vigilantly watch over the local Jewish community centers, such as our synagogue, to offer us the necessary added protection and security, aside from our own security personnel, and to ensure the safety of our community members, who are concerned with the risk of publicly identifying themselves and exposing themselves to risk by visiting their place of worship. After all, we cannot possibly allow ourselves to live in an environment where attending a place of worship is considered dangerous, and we are certain that on the basis of recent events your police officers will do everything in their power to keep us safe from any harm.
With warmest appreciation, and deepest respect,
Rabbi Pini Dunner

Hello Rabbi Dunner,
Thank you for taking the time to write. I can tell you the security and safety of our city is the highest priority. We have been briefed by our intelligence unit on the instances that occurred at the places of worship, and now have a special watch at all of our places of worship in Beverly Hills. This occurred immediately after we learned of the incidents. This means high visibility patrols, police officers conducting security checks and also utilizing our decoy police vehicles. We also have our intell unit reaching out to provide any support or assessing any special security needs, and preparing a message to the community on our vigilance. This is an important time that we stay in close contact and continue to communicate in order to keep Beverly Hills a safe place to worship.
Last, I just learned about a post on social media regarding an incident in BH, in which a Postmates delivery driver made reference to the NY incident on a delivery in Beverly Hills. We are currently assessing this. The incident occurred at a home last night. At this time, we do not have any further information, but will provide an update when the investigators are done with their follow up today.
I will also follow up with a phone call to you.
Sincerely,
Sandra

See the literature tables for the letter to Beverly Hills Residents addressing the recent anti-Semitic attacks.

The Following Message is being shared on Social Media:

The following statement has been released by the family of Joseph Neumann:

Our father Mr. Josef Neumann was severely stabbed multiple times during the mass attack Saturday night. The knife penetrated his skull directly into the brain. He also suffered three cuts to the head, one cut to the neck, and his right arm has been shattered. Our father’s status is so dire that no surgery has yet been performed on the right arm. Doctors are not optimistic about his chances to regain consciousness, and if our father does miraculously recover partially, doctors expect that he will have permanent damage to the brain; leaving him partially paralyzed and speech-impaired for the rest of his life.

Our father has seven children, many grandchildren, a great-grandchild, and brothers and sisters. We thank all of those who have contacted us for prayers and support. Please continue to pray for Yehosef Ben Perel. (Yehosef is our father’s Hebrew name. Ben means son, and Perel was the name of our grand mother OBM.)

We urge fellow Jews across the United States and around the globe to please share on social media their own experiences with anti-Semitism and add the hashtag #MeJew. We shall not let this terrible hate-driven attack be forgotten, and let us all work to eradicate all sorts of hate.