

Tefilla Notebook

23 Kislev • Parshat Vayishlach • Birkat HaChodesh

December 16-17 2022

Steven Dorfman, President

Rabbi Pini Dunner, Senior Rabbi

Nafi Bar-Am, Chazan

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16

4:28PM CANDLELIGHTING

4:30PM MINCHA/KABBALAT SHABBAT

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17

8:30am GEMARA SHIUR

9:15am SHACHARIT

4:35pm MINCHA

5:25pm MAARIV

5:28pm SHABBAT ENDS

WEEKDAY DAVENING TIMES

	Shacharit	Mincha/Maariv
Sun	8:00am	4:30pm*
Mon-Thurs	7:00am	4:30pm*
Friday	7:00am	4:30pm*

*RABBI DUNNER WILL LIGHT THE MENORAH IN SHUL

MAZAL TOV

Mazal Tov to **Franck and Evelina Ruimy** on the birth of a baby girl, **Ellie Rose Abigail**, who was born last Friday.



THANK YOU

Rosalyn Rothman, Auralee Ring, Eric Rothman, and Elisha Rothman for sponsoring the Tribute kiddush luncheon for their husband and father, **Dr. Stephen Rothman, Shlomo Leib Gavriel ben Yosef z"l**, whose first yahrtzeit is on 28th of Kislev



The luncheon is for YINBH members and invited guests only

Dearest Members and Friends,

The conversation about Israel in the Jewish community around the world has turned decidedly negative. With the election of the "most right-wing government in Israeli history," and with the appointment as national security minister of Itamar Ben-Gvir – dubbed by the Jewish media as "an acolyte of Meir Kahane" who leads a "Jewish supremacist party", left-leaning non-Israeli Jews are apoplectic, while even those in the center are decidedly anxious.

Alan Dershowitz, whose bestselling book *The Case for Israel* has become a standard text for pro-Israel activists, joined the chorus of voices critical of Ben-Gvir and his political ally Betzalel Smotrich, suggesting that what they had demanded and proposed in order to be included in the coalition was "making it much harder to defend Israel." Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union of Reform Judaism, went much further, telling Ynet that "appointing Itamar Ben-Gvir as public security minister is like appointing David Duke, head of the KKK, to be attorney general."

The angst is overwhelming. Jonathan Freedland, an urbane, left-of-center British newspaper columnist and pundit not known for his alarmist views, has written an op-ed offering advice to those in the UK Jewish community concerned with the rise of Ben-Gvir, so that "the darkness this man threatens will not go unanswered." The article opens with a startling admission: "The conversation at every Jewish table I have sat around this last month has eventually come down to one topic... and can be reduced to a single name: Itamar Ben-Gvir."

So there you have it. Case closed. Itamar Ben-Gvir is the Jewish world's ultimate bogeyman, with no audible dissenting voice arguing to the contrary. It would appear that accepted wisdom has determined the verdict on Ben-Gvir, and – depending on where you are on the political map – either his elevation to government minister is the final nail in the coffin of mainstream Jewish diaspora support for Israel, or, at best, Jewish support for Israel in the diaspora will limp along through clenched teeth until the day, hopefully soon, when the Israeli electorate will come to its senses and rid the country of this troublesome miscreant.

Well, without wanting to be a party pooper, I, for one, am far more sanguine. Let me tell you why. Firstly, for those – like me – who utterly reject the concept of Israel as a colonial entity which imposes its self-serving will on hapless indigenous Arabs, the idea that I might have a better idea of how Israel, the world's only Jewish country, should run itself because I happen to be Jewish, and because I support the concept of a Jewish state, is totally preposterous. Israel is entitled to present electoral choices to its voters – as it frequently has over the past few years – and then it is up to those voters to choose, via a majority, the people they trust to run their country. I don't have a say, I don't want a say, and the presumptuous arrogance of those who think that they know what is good for Israel better than Israeli voters, is the kind of condescending colonialist attitude that is so rightly deplored by the modern world.

And while you hold that thought, what I find particularly intriguing is that when the outgoing government chose in 2021 to include an Arab nationalist party that is root-and-branch opposed to Israel's legitimacy to be part of the government coalition, there were no handwringing "conversations at every Jewish table" and angst-ridden op-eds about how Israel was doomed for all time. Which, of course, it wasn't. Because everyone understood that Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid's government was a legitimate expression of Israeli democracy – as is the case with this new government, whatever its components may be.

And now let me turn to Itamar Ben-Gvir, the universally declared ogre of Israeli politics. What has he done to deserve his terrible reputation? Having read everything there is to read, I can summarize it as follows: it is his cited admiration for Meir Kahane, it is Baruch Goldstein's photo in his living room (long removed), and it is his 2007 conviction for racism, for having displayed signs that read "Expel the Arab enemy" and "Arab MKs are a fifth column." But while this may be discomforting for western liberal sensibilities, in comparison to the backstories and activities of some of Israel's rightwing icons, it all seems rather lame.

Menachem Begin led a "terrorist" organization, Irgun, that was responsible for, among other things, the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946 that led to the deaths of 91 people. Yitzchak Shamir was a member of Lehi, an Irgun splinter group. He was responsible for the 1944 assassination of Lord Moyne, the British Minister for Middle East Affairs who Zionist revisionists believed was opposed to the creation of Israel. And both Begin and Shamir went on to become prime ministers of Israel and seasoned statesmen. Once they were involved in politics and had the responsibility of political leadership, their sharper edges were abandoned, and pragmatism prevailed.

On that note, I'd now like to up the ante. Unlike the countless defeatist pundits who have unequivocally declared Israel to be on an inexorable trajectory towards disaster, all without actually speaking to the person at whose door they lay blame for this pessimistic outlook, I reached out to Itamar Ben-Gvir to ask him what message he had for diaspora Jews concerned for the future of Israel with him playing a pivotal role.

(Cont'd on page 2)



Ben-Gvir is bemused by the furor his political elevation has had on Jews living outside Israel. "We Jews all have a common enemy," he told me, "and that enemy is Jihad – people who want to turn the whole world into a retrograde caliphate and who think that non-Muslims have no right to be in Israel." But what about the Arabs in Israel, I asked him? He is set to be minister in charge of the police, which means he will be responsible for Arab wellbeing and security, not just for Jews. "I love our Jewish country, our Jewish land, but my job in the government will be, with God's help, to take care of everyone in Israel, secular and religious, Jews and Arabs – so that all our children, and I mean Arab children as well as Jewish children – can walk safely on the street." He sounded serious and sincere.

I told him that diaspora Jews are worried about what might happen now that he was part of the government. He expressed surprise. "Those who want to hurt us in Israel want to hurt you in the diaspora too," he told me. "What starts in Israel continues and expands to harm Jews everywhere, and they also want to harm the whole world, God forbid, not just Jews. One can never give in to terrorism, and I will make sure that we stand firm in the face of terrorism. It is not about Arabs, but about terrorism. And I have made that very clear."

I have come to the conclusion that rather than froth at the mouth about a worst-case-scenario that hasn't actually happened, how about we give Bibi Netanyahu and his new government the chance to govern. Rather than throw in the towel and give up on Israel, let's give the country of Jewish destiny, the realization of a two-millennia dream, an opportunity to work itself out—to take care of itself as it knows best.

In Parshat Vayeishev, Joseph dreams that his brothers are harvesting sheaves of wheat. In retelling his dream, he informs his brothers (Gen. 37:7): וַהֲבֵה הָקֵה אֶלְמָתִי וְגַם הָבָה – "suddenly my sheaf stood up and remained upright." The Midrash connects the word "alumati" (my sheaf) with the Hebrew word "ilem," which means someone who is mute—totally silent. According to the Midrash, Joseph was reminding his brothers that Rachel remained silent so as not to embarrass Leah when Jacob married Leah instead of her.

But while this is an interesting cross reference, how does Rachel's silence connect to the story of Joseph and his brothers? The message, I believe, is simple. The Midrash is making an astute observation about the value of silence when instinct compels you to voice an objection. Rachel was usurped by her sister and could justifiably have wrecked Leah's wedding to Jacob. But she didn't do that. She remained silent for her sister, because she loved her sister, and allowed fate to unfold – and in the end it all turned out okay.

Joseph's brothers feared his intention to eliminate them from the scene and to replace them as Jacob's designated heir. Joseph wanted his brothers to know, via the loaded language used to describe his dream, that they were faced with the same choice Rachel had faced – the potential danger of their substitution in someone else's favor. The test of their character was if they could remain silent and wait it out, rather than cause irreparable damage to the family.

As diaspora Jews we are all faced with a choice. Either we can give voice to fears, founded or unfounded, regarding Itamar Ben-Gvir in particular, and Israel's right-leaning government in general—potentially throwing Israel under the bus in the process. Or we can emulate Rachel, remaining silent in the face of perceived doom—perceived, because it might just be an almighty storm in a teacup.

I know which way I'm going on this; I encourage you to go that way too.

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

Sisterhood Corner

DECEMBER/JANUARY

Oh Chanukah, Oh Chanukah
Come light the menorah
Come to our YINBH Chanukah Dinner
We'll all dance the hora
Gather 'round the table
We'll give you a treat,
Dreidels to play with and latkes to eat

Celebrate Shabbat Chanukah with your YINBH family!

Chanukah Shabbat Dinner
Friday, December 23rd
RSVP at yinhb.org/chanukah

Annual Chanukah toy drive benefiting Chai Lifeline.

Please help us lift the spirits of a child this Chanukah by purchasing a gift.
www.toydrive.org/toydrive to purchase

The Cairo Geniza with Rabbi Aubrey Hersh

Learn how the discoveries found in the Cairo Geniza changed Jewish History
Thursday, January 5th at 7:00 pm
RSVP at yinhb.org/cairogeniza

Our next YINBH Book Group read!

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
Get ready for an interesting discussion!

Shabbat Shalom and wishing you a Chanukah Sameach!
Cecile & Ruthie
Sisterhood Co-Presidents

YAHRTZEITS

David Ben-Nathan
Father of
Laurette Ben-Nathan
Yahrtzeit - 23 Kislev

Rita Gerson
Rachel Leah bat Yishayahu a"h
Mother of
Nadine Gerson
Yahrtzeit - 25 Kislev

Leonard Melvin Rosenthal
Father of
Karen Fisher
Yahrtzeit - 26 Kislev

Bernard Finkel
Baruch ben Oizer Halevi z"l
Brother of
Harry Finkel
Yahrtzeit - 27 Kislev

Stephen Rothman
Shlomo Leib Gavriel
ben Yosef z"l
Husband of
Rosalyn Rothman
Yahrtzeit - 28 Kislev

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Sydney Hogan
Jeremy Wizman
Ariella Sassover
Benjamin Samuel
Liam Mostadim
Ryan Cohen
Sarah Meier
Shlomo Dunner
Eliezer Zucker

Happy Anniversary

Hillel & Ruthie Kellerman
Evan & Liz Greenspan
David & Allison Sostchen
Bob Zeller & Nadine Gerson
John & Sherri Fogelman

YINBH
SISTERHOOD

BOOK GROUP EVENT

LAUREN BELFER

for
Her
Book "And After
The Fire"

Tuesday, January 17th
at 7:30pm

RSVP at yinbh.org/bookgroup



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
Services followed by Kiddush

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

THE CAIRO GENIZA

with Rabbi Aubrey Hersh

Thursday, January 5th, 2023 at 7pm
YINBH - 9261 Alden Drive Beverly Hills 90210

The most lucrative prize of the 19th century: 250,000 documents of antiquity. Tailed by scandals and forgeries, it took one single Hebrew fragment to change history forever.

Rabbi Hersh is the author of an extremely popular weekly podcast: **"History for the Curious"**. Having spent over 25 years as an international lecturer and educator, he is renowned for his talks on History, Halacha and Jewish Thought.

RSVP at yinbh.org/cairogeniza

YINBH BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE
YOUNG ISRAEL OF NORTH BEVERLY HILLS

2022 ANNUAL CHANUKAH TOY DRIVE!

BENEFITING CHAI LIFELINE

Participate by purchasing a gift from Chai's
Amazon wishlist!

Please purchase your gift by December 31st, 2022

Visit www.yinbh.org/toydrive to participate

CHANUKAH DINNER

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23RD
6TH NIGHT OF
CHANUKAH**

**4:00pm Menorah Lighting
4:30 Shabbat Candle Lighting
followed by Kabbalat Shabbat
5:30pm Chanukah Dinner**

TISH AFTER PARTY

- Menorah lighting
- Latkes
- Sufganiyot
- Dreidels
- Chanukah Songs
- Magic show
- and much more

Early Bird Before Dec. 9th:

Adults \$45, Children 2-12 \$25

After Dec. 9th:

Adults \$55, Children 2-12 \$35

Planning Committee:
Jonathan & Julie Boyer
Jeff Gross & Gina Raphael
Mark & Marlene Perl
Daniel & Bella Strum
Michael & Tova Zaghi

RSVP at YINBH.org/chanukah

YINBH
BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE