

Tefilla Notebook

24 Shevat • Yitro • Birkat Hachodesh

February 5-6, 2021

Steven Dorfman, President

Rabbi Pini Dunner, Senior Rabbi

Nati Bar-Am, Chazan



Dear Members and Friends,

William L. Rowe (1931–2015) was a distinguished professor of philosophy at Purdue University who specialized in the philosophy of religion. Although he discovered and embraced evangelical Christianity as a teenager, in later years he evolved into an avid atheist, basing his transformation on what is known as the 'evidential argument from evil'. This position is grounded in the existence of seemingly pointless evil, such as violent or painful death caused by natural phenomenon – prompting the question: why would a loving God allow such evils to exist? Surely, if God is all-powerful and benevolent, there would be no pointless suffering? In his anthology, *God and the Problem of Evil*, Rowe actually narrowed down his position to this: "An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse."

Various theologians, particularly from the group known as 'skeptical theists', reject the evidentiary evil argument based on strong counter arguments, and even Rowe was ready to acknowledge the power of their reasoning, although he was never persuaded out of his atheism. But his struggles with God-belief on the basis of our human concept of an omnipotent, omniscient God echo a profound theological debate that has raged throughout the history of religious faith, widely known as the 'omnipotence paradox'.

If God is all-powerful – which is undoubtedly the central belief of mainstream monotheism – can He create something that would confound His own power? Or, as J. L. Cowan put it (*Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. III, No. 3, March 1974): "(1) Either God can create a stone which He cannot lift, or He cannot create a stone which He cannot lift. (2) If God can create a stone which He cannot lift, then He is not omnipotent (since He cannot lift the stone in question). (3) If God cannot create a stone which He cannot lift, then He is not omnipotent (since He cannot create the stone in question). (4) Therefore, God is not omnipotent."

In another instance of this paradox, the thirteenth century Roman Catholic philosopher, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), deliberated whether or not God could create a triangle in which the angles didn't add up to 180 degrees. Another problem he grappled with was this: can God create a flat circle where $\pi = 3$? Such a shape could not possibly exist on a flat surface, only on a curved surface, and warping space to create such a circle would be the same as placing the object on a curved surface. Which proves that God's powers are limited by the laws of mathematics – in which case He cannot be omnipotent.

Before revealing why none of these questions should undermine our faith in God, let me turn to the source of our Jewish faith existence and belief system, the Ten Commandments, as found in Parshat Yitro (and again in Va'etchanan), which begin with (Ex. 20:2): "אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים - "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." What follows on from this is a series of do's and do-not's, the majority of which reflect the basic rules of any just society – don't murder, don't steal, don't behave immorally – and as Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz (1937-2020) observes, "in part, at least, similar ideas are already found in the older law codes of Babylon and Egypt, India and China."

Putting this aside for a moment, it is the first commandment that is most puzzling. Throughout the history of Torah commentary, the great commentators have wrestled with two questions that arise from this opening verse of the Torah's most profound text. Firstly, why is it presented as a statement about God, not a commandment to believe in God? Second, why does God describe Himself as the 'One who took you out of Egypt'? Why not simply instruct His chosen people to believe in Him, period?

The great Spanish commentator, Don Isaac Abarbanel (1437-1508), controversially suggests that this first 'commandment' is not a commandment at all, rather it is an opening preamble, setting the stage for what follows, and indeed for all the mitzvot of the Torah. Without belief in God, and the power that He holds to do anything He desires – such as miraculously extricate an entire nation from persecution and slavery with the accompaniment of supernatural wonders – justice and morality are empty ideals, essentially self-serving vessels and an exercise in collective vanity.

Can God prevent murder, theft and immorality from ever happening? Of course. That is exactly what the opening verse of the Ten Commandments teaches us. But does God actually prevent murder, theft and immorality from ever happening? No, he doesn't. He hands that power over to us. God's omnipotence is not compromised by the existence of evil, whether by human hands or as a result of natural phenomena. He deliberately created a world in which the natural order is an overriding power – except in exceptional circumstances, such as the formation of His chosen people, who are expected to be ambassadors of God-belief in a world where God-denial is not just possible, but a prevailing reality.

As to the omnipotence paradox, it is not a paradox at all. The seminal French philosopher, René Descartes (1596-1650), dismisses the whole idea that an omnipotent being is ever incapable of doing anything, even if the act in question makes no sense to us because it is profoundly illogical. Simply put, God can make contradictions true if He wants to, and could therefore create a stone too heavy for Him to lift – and still lift it.

Don't ask me how this works, as I haven't the faintest idea. But the Jewish nation is certainly proof that the impossible is possible, and our existence flies in the face of any questions regarding God's omnipotence. As the Swiss philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) observed, in wonder: "The Jews provide us with an astonishing spectacle... Athens, Sparta, Rome have perished and no longer have children left on earth; Zion, destroyed, has not lost its children... Any man whosoever he is, must acknowledge this as a unique marvel, the causes of which, divine or human, certainly deserve the study and admiration of the sages."

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom and a great week ahead,

Rabbi Pini Dunner

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 5TH

CANDLELIGHTING 5:09pm

FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICES 5:15pm

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6TH

PESUKEI D'ZIMRA 8:45AM

MORNING SERVICES 9:00AM

MINCHA 5:20pm

SHABBAT ENDS 6:14pm

WEEKDAY DAVENING TIMES

Sunday 8:00am & 5:20pm

Mon- Fri 7:00am & 5:20pm

Services are also on zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/226829899>

Passcode: yinbh

Rosh Chodesh Adar is next week on Friday, Feb. 12th & Shabbat, Feb. 13th

MAZAL TOV

Franck & Evelina Ruimy on the birth of their baby girl, **Scarlett Elisheva!**

Thank you to **Franck & Evelina** for sponsoring this week's kiddush to-go in honor of their daughter.

YINBH MOURNS JUDAH HERTZ Z"l



Hillel Kellerman writes: On the occasion of the untimely passing of Judah Hertz z"l, it is appropriate to remember that without Judah, there would be no Young Israel of North Beverly Hills. In the summer of 1992, Judah had the vision to obtain a venue for our itinerant minyan. Judah singlehandedly obtained a lease, remodeled the space and commissioned the construction of our original Aron Hakodesh and Mechitza for the first YINBH location on Civic Center Drive. We have all benefited from his bold initiative and must acknowledge our debt for his pioneering efforts. Baruch Dayan Ha'emet.

Sisterhood Corner

February

Purim is only three weeks away!
This year a portion of the money
raised will go
towards lone IDF soldiers in Israel
& Tomchei Shabbos helping
families in our community
impacted by Covid-19.
Email office@yinh.org to sign
up!

Mark your calendars

Trivia Night Is Back!

Sunday, February 28th at 7pm

Make sure to register at
Beverlyhillssynagogue.org/trivia

Shabbat Shalom,
Cecile & Ruthie
Sisterhood Co-Presidents



*Franck Ruimy
Natalie Wizman
Kele Kirschenbaum
Evan Richter
Eva Feldberg
Barbara Bernstein
Tammy Weisman
Zachary Sudar*

YAHRTZEITS

Rose B. Raphael
Mother of
Gina Raphael
Yahrtzeit - 25 Shevat

Raquel Monlack Sochaczewski
Rachel bat Shlomo a"h
Mother of
Jaime Sohacheski
Yahrtzeit - 25 Shevat

Sarah Finkel
Sarah bat Shmuel a"h
Mother of
Susan Baum
Yahrtzeit - 27 Shevat

Raya Avromson Rambod
Raya bat Rahamim a"h
Mother of
Edmond Rambod
Yahrtzeit - 28 Shevat

Brian Joseph
Shimon ben Meir Yonason z"l
Father of
Emma Almond
Yahrtzeit - 28 Shevat

Richard Laks
Yisrael ben Avraham z"l
Father of
Hillel Laks
Yahrtzeit - 30 Shevat

Irving Weiner
Joshua Ben-David Baer z"l
Father of
Michael Weiner
Yahrtzeit - 30 Shevat

Sarah Finkel
Sarah bat Shmuel a"h
Mother of
Harry Finkel
Yahrtzeit - 26 Shevat



Thank you to everyone who
joined us in our Tu B'shvat
Wine Tasting! Thank you
to **Michael Bernstein** from
The Cask and **Joshua**
Greenstein from the **Israel**

Wine Producers Association for leading the
program and sharing all your insights.



Thank you to everyone who joined us for the virtual "Golden Age for the Cantorate" Concert. Thank you to Chazzan Nati Baram for performing and Tali Tadmor on piano. Thank you to Professor Mark Kligman for your lessons on the great cantors who we gave tribute to in this concert. The full concert can be found on our website at beverlyhillssynagogue.org



Thursday, Feb. 25th -
Mincha 6pm Megillah 6:30pm
in-person and live streamed

Friday, Feb. 26th -
Shacharit & Megillah 7am
in person only

Friday, Feb. 26th
Megillah Only 10am
in person and live streamed

PURIM 2021

All Megilla readings will be taking place on the Nissel Tennis Court. Pre-registration is required.

RSVP at beverlyhillssynagogue.org/megilla

All megillah readings will be leined by **Chazzan Nati Baram**

Matanot Laevyonim

Rabbi Dunner is going to be distributing Matanot La'evyonim to needy families in Los Angeles and Jerusalem. You can contribute on our website or send in a check. The online cutoff date is **February 25th**

YINBH SISTERHOOD

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR MISHLOACH MANOT 2021



Join our YINBH Community in celebrating Purim with another fabulous Sisterhood Mishloach Manot basket.

Let us come together to perform the joyous mitzvah of Mishloach Manot & contribute to the Sisterhood's biggest fundraiser of the year!

**We are accepting orders from now until
February 18th.**

Cost to participate is \$275 per household.

This year a portion of the money raised will be donated to Tomchei Shabbos & Meir Mishkoff Z'L Mishloach Manot Campaign

To order visit

www.beverlyhillssynagogue.org/purim

BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE
YOUNG ISRAEL OF NORTH BEVERLY HILLS



MISHLOACH MANOT PARTICIPANTS SO FAR:

Michael & Susan Baum
Michael & Maggie Bayer
Nati & Carmit Baram
Bill & June Brenner
Hart & Debbie Cohen
Steve & Vivian Dorfman
Rabbi Pini & Sabine Dunner
Marty & Eva Feldberg
Richard & Shawney Fine
Harry Finkel & Shirley Aizenstein
George & Suzi Fischmann
Jerry & Jean Friedman
Jason Fuchs
Aaron & Lillian Fuchs
Larry & Judith Garshofsky
Ernie & Regina Goldberger
Reuven & Becky Grabel
Evan & Liz Greenspan
Daniel Gromis
Ed & Cecile Gromis
Chavi Hertz
Patrick & Ginette Hodara
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Avrumie & Maryjo Schnitzer
David & Michele Silver
Myrtle Sitowitz
Jaime & Marilyn Sohacheski
Norm & Virginia Solomon
Seymour & Grace Stoll
Bart & Arleen Tanenbaum
Bob Zeller & Nadine Gerson

PURIM



TRIVIA NIGHT

Sunday
February
28th at
7PM

ONLINE
VIA ZOOM
PRIZES AWAIT
OUR WINNERS

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

beverlyhillssynagogue.org/trivia

 **BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE**
YOUNG ISRAEL OF NORTH BEVERLY HILLS

PASSOVER SEDERs IN BEVERLY HILLS

Passover 2021

1ST NIGHT, SATURDAY, MARCH 27TH

8:00PM

2ND NIGHT, SUNDAY, MARCH 28TH

8:00PM



IN-PERSON SEDERS (PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL)
TAKEOUT SEDERS AVAILABLE
GOURMET GLATT KOSHER
INTERNATIONAL WINE SELECTION

COMMUNAL SEDERS LED BY RABBI PINI DUNNER & CHAZZAN NATI BARAM

ADULT: \$195 (\$225 AFTER MARCH 1) CHILD: \$89 (\$99 AFTER MARCH 1)
TAKEOUT: ADULT \$150 CHILD \$89

ישיבה BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE
YOUNG ISRAEL OF NORTH BEVERLY HILLS

9261 Alden Drive Beverly Hills, CA 90210

RESERVE AT:

310-276-7650 or beverlyhillssynagogue.org/seder

Kosher for Passover OU Certification
catering by:

Bel Air
CATERING BY CHEF BZ

ISRAEL BONDS WESTERN REGION WOMEN'S DIVISION

&



BEVERLY HILLS SYNAGOGUE
YOUNG ISRAEL OF NORTH BEVERLY HILLS

INVITE YOU TO AN IMPORTANT AND TIMELY VIRTUAL EVENT

**ANTI-SEMITISM: IMPACT ON THE NEXT GENERATION
& DOES THE MEDIA HAVE ANY RESPONSIBILITY?**

FEATURING



BARI WEISS

American opinion writer and editor
Author of How to Fight Anti-Semitism

IN CONVERSATION WITH

ROZ ROTHSTEIN

Founder & CEO of StandWithUs

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2021
5:30PM (PST) VIA ZOOM**

Program

5:30pm PST / 8:30pm EST

Minimum \$36 Israel bond Investment required

Followed by VIP Reception

6:30pm PST / 9:30pm EST

Minimum \$500 Israel Bond Investment for 2021 required

REGISTER AT

<https://tinyurl.com/yxagelva>

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