



Tefilla Notebook

8 Iyyar • Parshat Achrei Mot - Kedoshim

May 1-2, 2020

Stephen Rothman, President • Rabbi Pini Dunner, Senior Rabbi • Nati Bar-Am, Chazan
9261 Alden Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90210 310-276-7650 • office@yinh.org

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, MAY 1

7:20pm CANDLELIGHTING

SATURDAY, MAY 2

8:20pm SHABBAT ENDS

Guidelines for Praying at home:

When davening at home, it is best to daven at the same time that you would have davened when in shul. Although you cannot *hear* the krias Hatorah, you should still read the torah portion and haftarah aloud, using the tunes if you know them.

Stone Chumash (Artscroll)

Achrei-Mot p. 636-655
Kedoshim p. 656-671

Haftora Achrei -- p. 1173

Dearest Members and Friends,

To be perfectly frank, until earlier this week I had never heard the name Rabbi Chaim Mertz. And truthfully, nor would I have heard of him had he not sadly passed away from COVID-19 on Monday, after battling the deadly virus for several weeks. And despite the quite florid descriptions of him in various death notices, descriptions later picked up by the mainstream media, Rabbi Mertz was the unassuming rabbi of a tiny Hasidic community in Williamsburg.



In which case, you may be wondering why I am drawing your attention to this obscure rabbinic figure – especially as according to my friends in Brooklyn, the regular attendance at his synagogue each Shabbat never amounted to more than a couple of dozen men. Well, the reason is this: despite Rabbi Mertz's rather modest following and humble public profile, his funeral was attended by well over 2,000 people all standing in close proximity to each other, notwithstanding the social distancing guidelines currently mandated in New York. To be fair, many of the mourners were wearing masks, but they were nonetheless compromising themselves in the face of the very infectious nature of this deadly disease.

What makes all of this even more perplexing is that the Haredi community in New York is currently reeling from a disproportionate number of COVID-related deaths – and many of those who have died were senior rabbinic leaders, including, ironically, the rabbi whose funeral these mourners were attending.

As the crowds grew at the funeral and police struggled to enforce the required distancing, New York mayor Bill de Blasio drove across from Gracie Mansion to see what was happening, perhaps hoping he could mitigate the situation via his close contacts in the Williamsburg Satmar community. As it turned out he was unable to achieve anything useful, and he later lashed out on Twitter with a "message to the Jewish community, and all communities." Adopting a rather stern tone, he tweeted that "the time for warnings has passed. I have instructed the NYPD to proceed immediately to summons or even arrest those who gather in large groups. This is about stopping this disease and saving lives. Period."

His crudely worded tweet was immediately and rightly criticized by the Anti-Defamation League – among many others – as grubby political grandstanding at best, and, much more worryingly, as antisemitic dogwhistling that could lead to attacks against Jews and Jewish buildings in New York. De Blasio later apologized, saying he had been trying to use "tough love" when speaking out against those who attended a funeral. In the meantime, Rabbi Mertz's community issued a widely disseminated apology for the ill-advised crowding at their rabbi's funeral. Others within the wider Haredi community pointed out that Haredim in the tristate area were by-and-large complying with stay-at-home orders, and that all of their synagogues and schools remain firmly shut.

Before tackling the core issue at hand, let me say with reference to this particular point that while it is technically true, I am informed on good authority that at least one senior rabbinic authority has permitted rabbis to host prayers in their basements, as long as prayers are not held at their synagogues so as to avoid official interference, and many such clandestine gatherings meet daily. Such an approach is clearly unacceptable, and if anyone dies as a result of this ill-judged ruling then the responsibility will lie squarely with the rabbi who allowed it to happen.

But the point I would really like to address is this: why was it left to NYPD and Bill de Blasio to regulate an over-attended funeral? Are there no senior rabbis and community leaders in Williamsburg with a sense of responsibility for what is going on in their own neighborhood, who can speak up and assert their authority with those who are flouting rules and thereby endangering lives? Personally I think that there are, but for some reason they are choosing to hold their fire.

And rather than focusing on Bill de Blasio's clumsy intervention, which I see as nothing more than a rhetorical distraction, a useful bait-and-switch for those who want to deflect criticism, how about focusing on the fact that strong leadership is desperately required to halt the deadly impact of coronavirus on the close-knit orthodox communities. The "tough love" shouldn't be coming from the New York mayor, it should be coming in spades from Rebbe and Rosh Yeshivas. I have seen innumerable rabbinic missives regarding a range of halachic and hashkafic issues thrown up by this crazy situation, but they all seem to be missing the point – your leadership has no meaning if you are not principally focused on addressing the issues that will prevent the wholesale death of those who look to you for guidance.

And let me say this – as a communal rabbi, right now what concerns me first-and-foremost is the health and safety of those who belong to my community. Our synagogue in Beverly Hills was closed before the closure of public buildings was mandated by the California authorities, and you can be sure that it will remain closed for as long as there is even a hint of doubt as to the safety of opening up a building for public gatherings. My consistent and overriding concern is to ensure that lives are protected, and lethal risk is minimized. And moreover, I will loudly proclaim that those rabbis who look for loopholes and compromises, or who turn a blind eye to the willful contravention of lifesaving measures, are disgracing their titles and positions.

This Shabbat we will read (at home, on our own) the portion of Kedoshim, which begins with an exhortation for us to "be holy" (Lev. 19:2). In the wake of this declaration one expects a series of ritual laws and esoteric spiritual edicts that align with our understanding of the word "holy." But what we actually get are laws which insist that we take care of the poor and underprivileged, be honest in business, be considerate and fair to others, and so on – remarkably there is nothing about davening with a minyan or attending public gatherings that might endanger others.

Of course the explanation is simple. Holiness has no meaning if we are inconsiderate towards others. And there is no greater inconsideration than the callous disregard of other people's safety. The late Rabbi Chaim Mertz was known, rather curiously, as the Tola'as Yaakov ('Worm Jacob') Rebbe, a reference to the verse in Isaiah (41:14): "Fear not, worm Jacob, remnant of Israel: I will help you – declares God – your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

The Midrash comments on this verse that although a worm appears weak and feeble, in reality it can destroy mighty objects purely via the power of its mouth. The power of Jacob – the Jewish nation – is not in its size or strength, but in its ability to use its mouth as a powerful tool for elevating and improving the world. The time has come for Jacob to speak up and be heard, to say loud and clear "kedoshim tiheyu" – be holy to God by preserving and protecting the precious life that He has given us.

Praying for your safety and health, and for only good news, with God's help. Shabbat Shalom!

Pini Dunner

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

During this time of mandated social distancing, we are still keeping our community connection.



Connect with our Whatsapp Groups

- ◇ [YINBH Community](#)
- ◇ [Daily 5-minute parsha thought](#)
- ◇ [Daily Daf Yomi Shiur](#)
- ◇ [Parsha Shiurim](#)
- ◇ [YINBH Videos](#)

A message from Myrtle Sitowitz

Thank you to the entire community for your condolences on the passing of my dear sister. Thank you for the Pesach package from the sisterhood.

Sisterhood Corner May

Ladies, remember to tune in to our
May 4th

Evening In at 8pm via Zoom. Bring
your most creative Mother's Day
ideas!

We are looking forward to the time
when we will
all be together again.
Until then, let's Zoom!

Shabbat Shalom,
Cecile & Ruthie
Sisterhood Co-Presidents



Elissa Czucker

Shirin Fialkov

Debbie Cohen

Yehuda Feigen

Wendy Wallack

Suzi Weiss

Happy Anniversary

Chazzan Nati & Carmit Baram

YAHRTZEITS

Isadore Finkel
Oyzer ben Pinchas Halevi z"l
Father of
Harry Finkel
Yahrtzeit— 8 Iyyar

Kitty Elsie Finkelstein
Esther Rachael bat
Avraham Yaakov a"h
Mother of
Shari Weiner
Yahrtzeit— 13 Iyyar

Jacob Samuel
Yaakov ben Moshe z"l
Father of
Joseph Samuel
Yahrtzeit— 13 Iyyar

Jan Czucker
Yosef ben Menachem
Mendel z"l
Father of
Edward Czucker
Mark Zucker
Husband of
Suzanne Czucker
Yahrtzeit— 14 Iyyar

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

**Mincha/Maariv including
sefirat haomer**

Praying Together
Weekdays at 7:25pm
via Zoom

This does not count as a minyan

Meeting ID
226-829-899

SPONSOR A CLASS



*Honor the memory of a loved one, or celebrate
a simcha by sponsoring one of our zoom
classes. We will mention the sponsorship
beforehand and in any class materials.*

If interested, email mkramer@yinh.org

Let's Pray Together

Sponsorship
opportunity
available

Mincha & Kabbalat Shabbat on ZOOM



Candle lighting
7:20pm

Friday, May 1st at 6:15pm

Join in with the community for
Erev Shabbos prayers led by
Chazzan Nati Baram. Shabbat
message from Rabbi Pini Dunner



Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/3102767650>
Meeting ID: 310 276 7650

Join us again Motzei Shabbos for Havdalah at 8:40pm



CLASS SCHEDULE - WEEK OF MAY 3 - 9

THE ZOOM CODE FOR ALL CLASSES ARE **310 276 7650**

The log-in link is <https://zoom.us/j/3102767650>

DATE	TIME	TOPIC	CATEGORY
Sunday May 3	11:00am	Treasures from the Rabbi's Library	History
Sunday May 3	1:00pm	Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Pini Dunner	Class
Sunday May 3	8:00pm	Tzurva MeRabanan with Chazzan Nati Baram	Class
Monday May 4	12:00pm	Class with Chazzan Nati Baram	Class
Monday May 4	8:00pm	Ladies Evening In	Sisterhood
Tuesday May 5	12:00pm	Tanach Shiur with Chazzan Nati Baram	Class
Wednesday May 6	11:00am	Parsha Shiur with Rabbi Pini Dunner	Class
Thursday May 7	12:00pm	Class with Chazzan Nati Baram	Class
Friday May 8	6:15pm	Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat	Tefilla
Saturday May 9	8:45pm	Havdalah	Tefilla

CALENDAR FOR COUNTING THE OMER COUNT IN THE EVENING AT OR AFTER MAARIV

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				APRIL 9 COUNT 1	APRIL 10 COUNT 2	APRIL 11 COUNT 3
APRIL 12 COUNT 4	APRIL 13 COUNT 5	APRIL 14 COUNT 6	APRIL 15 COUNT 7	APRIL 16 COUNT 8	APRIL 17 COUNT 9	APRIL 18 COUNT 10
APRIL 19 COUNT 11	APRIL 20 COUNT 12	APRIL 21 COUNT 13	APRIL 22 COUNT 14	APRIL 23 COUNT 15	APRIL 24 COUNT 16	APRIL 25 COUNT 17
APRIL 26 COUNT 18	APRIL 27 COUNT 19	APRIL 28 COUNT 20	APRIL 29 COUNT 21	APRIL 30 COUNT 22	MAY 1 COUNT 23	MAY 2 COUNT 24
MAY 3 COUNT 25	MAY 4 COUNT 26	MAY 5 COUNT 27	MAY 6 COUNT 28	MAY 7 COUNT 29	MAY 8 COUNT 30	MAY 9 COUNT 31
MAY 10 COUNT 32	MAY 11 COUNT 33	MAY 12 COUNT 34	MAY 13 COUNT 35	MAY 14 COUNT 36	MAY 15 COUNT 37	MAY 16 COUNT 38
MAY 17 COUNT 39	MAY 18 COUNT 40	MAY 19 COUNT 41	MAY 20 COUNT 42	MAY 21 COUNT 43	MAY 22 COUNT 44	MAY 23 COUNT 45
MAY 24 COUNT 46	MAY 25 COUNT 47	MAY 26 COUNT 48	MAY 27 COUNT 49			

YINBH Sisterhood Presents...

Ladies Evening In

How to Celebrate

Mother's Day



In the time of Coronavirus

— Monday, May 4th 8pm —

Via zoom
Zoom code 310 276 7650

*Come as you are
& let's get creative!*

