This article was written in July 2016 and I feel bears repeating.
Dearest Members and Friends,
This week marked the first anniversary of the Iran nuclear deal.

Last year at around this time, many of us were engaged in the effort to thwart the deal; yet, despite our valiant efforts, the deal went through and officially took effect in January.

Secretary of State John Kerry proclaimed this week that the agreement had “lived up to its expectations,” and asserted that Iran’s nuclear program had been effectively halted in exchange for sanctions relief.

Kerry’s statement coincided with the alarming revelation that a previously unseen secret document will allow key restrictions on Iran’s nuclear program to ease years before the 15-year accord expires.

The document was a secret letter submitted by Iran to the International Atomic Energy Agency at the same time the deal was signed, and it outlines Iran’s plans to expand its uranium enrichment program in just under 10 years.

Although not officially part of the signed agreement, the letter was tacitly approved by all of the six powers that negotiated the deal with Tehran.

This diplomatic sleight of hand was treachery, plain and simple—a shocking and deceptive play that turns the weak agreement we all suspected it to be into something that is even worse than that. In their haste to clinch a diplomatic coup, international negotiators gave away a lot more than was ever revealed, enabling Iran to turn itself into an existential threat in less than a decade.

What were they thinking? It defies explanation—particularly since Iran is now threatening to renege on the deal if the other parties don’t adhere to their side of the bargain—namely sanctions relief and international investment.

What an absolute mess.

As if this is not enough, two weeks ago the deputy chief of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, Hossein Salami, warned that his country has more than 100,000 missiles aimed and ready to fire at Israel, and added that “if the Zionists [sic] make a wrong move, all the occupied territories will come under attack from dedicated fighters and the territories will be liberated.”

And when he says “all the occupied territories” he means the whole of Israel, not just Judea and Samaria. Meanwhile, last week, in rallies across Iran attended by tens of thousands of people, Israeli and American flags were burnt amid chants of “Death to Israel!” and “Death to America!”

In 1954, at a White House luncheon with President Eisenhower, Sir Winston Churchill is reported to have told his host with reference to the Cold War, “To jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war.”

Churchill presumably meant that any kind of negotiations, however interminable and inconclusive, were always the better option if the alternative was military hostilities.

But while that might or might not be true, in the decades that have followed, this idea has been taken much further, and is now interpreted to mean that one should ignore enemy rhetoric, and never rise to any kind of verbal bait, as in the end no matter how violent they are, words are not missiles, and threats are not acts of war.

Let them ‘jaw-jaw’ all they want, the argument goes, because in the end who cares what they say, as long as we are not at war.

The Torah portion of Balak exposes just how foolish this approach is. The narrative describes how Balak, King of Moab, summons the notorious soothsayer Balaam to assist him in defeating the Jews before they overrun his country.

Balaam was no military strategist, nor was he in command of an army of crack mercenaries. It seems his only weapon was a powerful mouth, as Balak bluntly tells him:

‘פ"ק ד יזרעאל תאמר בן אברים וגו. For I know – that which you bless will be blessed, and that which you curse will be cursed.’

Ultimately Balak’s plan never materializes. God intervenes and prevents Balaam from cursing the Jews, and we are left wondering whether Balaam’s curses were quite as dangerous as Balak thought they were.

The medieval commentators struggle to explain the curse phenomenon, and opinions range from those who think curses work, and that Balaam’s were particularly effective, to those who think that Balaam was a wily charlatan who used clairvoyant skills to identify people who were about to have a stroke of bad luck, so that when their luck turned, everyone would assume his curses had caused their downfall.

Maimonides addresses the whole issue quite differently in his magnum opus, Guide to the Perplexed. As far as he is concerned, curses have no real power, but one is nonetheless forbidden to curse. He explains that as speech can cause such terrible pain, cursing is one of only three prohibitions not involving an action that in rabbinic law can lead to a punishment of lashes.

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Although this idea is itself very powerful, it fails to explain why God would have prevented Balaam from uttering curses, and instead turned his words into blessings. A possible solution is that Maimonides understood how violent rhetoric, although seemingly harmless, is always a precursor to physical violence, and is therefore the very gravest of curses, and instead turned his words into blessings. A possible solution is that Maimonides understood how violent rhetoric, although seemingly harmless, is always a precursor to physical violence, and is therefore the very gravest of curses, and instead turned his words into blessings.

Without a demagogue to whip up emotions, no soldier would ever go to war, and no army would ever be victorious. The benefit of Balaam’s curses were not in their effectiveness as curses, but in their ability to encourage the Moabites into battle against the invincible Jews, in the belief they could win.

When ‘jaw-jaw’ threatens “war-war,” it is no longer just “jaw-jaw.” If Iran encourages its people to chant “Death to America” and “Death to Israel,” you can be sure that as soon as they have the chance, both Israel and America, and numerous other countries, will be targeted. And with this week’s revelation regarding the accelerated threat from Iran’s nuclear program, we had better wake up before it’s too late.

Wishing you Shabbat Shalom and a great week ahead, Rabbi Pini Dunner
The Sisterhood proudly presents the following upcoming events:

**JULY**

**Beauty & Beasts: J. Paul Getty Center Museum Tour**

Join Art Historian & Museum Educator Deborah B. Thompson for an engaging tour of the beautiful masterpieces in the Getty Center collection, including artwork by Rembrandt, Bernini, van Gogh, Monet, Cézanne, and many more! Encounter magical creatures of golden manuscripts in the “Book of Beasts” exhibition, and stroll through the beautiful gardens for stunning, panoramic views of Los Angeles.

Don’t miss this Museum Tour!

**Sunday, July 28th**

10:00am  
Member: $20  
Non-Member: $30  
YP: $16  
*Please ride-share; parking is an additional $20  
Please RSVP!

If you would like to join the Mincha/Maariv WhatsApp Group, please send a message to the Rabbi on WhatsApp at 310-499-3407

**Happy Birthday!**

Julia Baum  
Emmanuelle Hodara  
Gae Kam  
Darryl Kam  
Lily Kramer  
Madeline Kramer  
Joan Lopatin  
Yasmine Louie  
Bruce Schloss  
Ilana Stoll  
Jaron Wallack

**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.

**Weekly Parsha Shiur**

Join Rabbi Dunner each Wednesday morning at 8:30am 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, July 24th 2019 at 8:30am. We will not be meeting next week.

The class on July 24th is sponsored by Aaron, Lillian and Jason Fuchs in memory of Sara Fuchs, Chaya Surah bat Gittel a"h, whose yahrtzeit is 26 Tammuz.

**Yahrtzeits**

**Anita Bernstein**  
Hinda a"h  
Mother of  
**Barbara Bernstein**  
Yahrtzeit—17 Tammuz

**Naftali Tzvi**  
Naftali Tzvi ben Chaim  
Yaakov z"l  
Father of  
**David Frankel**  
Yahrtzeit—17 Tammuz

**Regina Epstein**  
Rivka bat Natan a"h  
Mother of  
**Natan Epstein**  
Yahrtzeit—18 Tammuz

**Dovid Oved Sochaczewski**  
Dovid Oved ben Dov z"l  
Father of  
**Jaime Sohacheski**  
Yahrtzeit—22 Tammuz

**July 27th**

Kiddush Sponsored by Bill & Linda Levin in memory of Bill’s father, Isadore Levin, Yitzchak ben Aharon David HaLevi z”l.

**July 28th**

Getty Museum Tour led by Docent Deborah Thompson.

**August 18th**

Full Membership  
Town Hall Meeting—6:30pm

Ladies - Join us every Wednesday at 8:30am for Rabbi Dunner’s Ladies Parsha Shiur! Bring inspiring new insights to your Shabbat table each week!

Have a wonderful Shabbat!

Cecile & Ruthie  
Sisterhood Co-Presidents
YINBH Beverly Hills Synagogue is now producing a weekly bulletin titled “Israel Headlines.” You will find them on the tables every Shabbat. The mission of “Israel Headlines” is to make Jews in the Diaspora aware of current events in Israel. Sponsorship for Israel Headlines is available for $100. If you are interested in sponsoring a weekly bulletin please email israelheadlines@gmail.com

FILM SCREENING: AMNESIA
Film Begins at 6:30pm

AMNESIA combines the personal, political, and historical, tracing the horror of a pogrom committed against the Jewish residents of the Polish city of Kielce on the 4th of July, 1946. This atrocity was committed by their neighbors, fellow Poles of Kielce. This film seeks to gain some perspective on the Kielce Pogrom, an event that has been all but scrubbed from the history of Poland. The filmmaker searches for answers, even reflecting on his own family’s complicity (and perhaps more) in the event.

ISRAEL HEADLINES

The reception will take place at the home of:
Jackie and Victor Cohencu
in Beverly Hills
August 8th 7:30pm
To RSVP and for more information about the organization: T+49-30-1785
Email: tzmi@intelligence.org.il

The Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center (IICC)

We are pleased to invite you to a special reception presenting:

OPERATION BROTHERS

One of the Mossad’s greatest rescue missions bringing 12,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel while embedded in hostile Sudan.

Special guest speaker:
Yael Reitman, former Mossad agent

We tell the story of the Mossad’s dramatic rescue mission and will share the important role in the operation.

A movie, with an aftercast about this daring operation featuring Ben Kingsley, Chris Evans and Haley Bennett

As Yael Reitman is soon to be released.

OU GREATER LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY
SHIVA ASAR B’TAMMUZ
Sunday, July 21, 2019 | 7:30PM

GUEST SPEAKER
Rabbi Avi Stewart
WESTWOOD KEHILLA, LOS ANGELES
“Rebuilding the Bet haMikdash: Developing Ahavat Chinam”

MINCHA 7:30PM
MAARIV 8:35PM
FAST ENDS 8:44PM

THIS YEAR’S TEFILA WILL BE HOSTED BY:
BETH JACOB CONGREGATION 9000 WEST OLYMPIC BLVD, BEVERLY HILLS
YINBH SISTERHOOD PRESENTS

Getty Collection & Gardens

tour led by Deborah Thompson

Sunday, July 28th
10:00 AM

The Getty
1200 Getty Center Dr.
Los Angeles, 90049

Member: $20
Non-Member $30
YP: $16

Please consider ride-sharing, parking is an additional $20

PLEASE RSVP (310) 276 - 7650 OR OFFICE@YINBH.ORG