

Kol Rina  
*An Independent Minyan*  
Parashat Vayeshev / Shabbat Chanukah  
December 9, 2023 \*\*\* 26 Kislev, 5784

[Vayeshev in a Nutshell](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3202/jewish/Vayeshev-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

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The name of the Parshah, "Vayeshev," means "And he dwelt" and it is found in Genesis 37:1.

Jacob settles in Hebron with his twelve sons. His favorite is seventeen-year-old Joseph, whose brothers are jealous of the preferential treatment he receives from his father, such as a precious many-colored coat that Jacob makes for Joseph. Joseph relates to his brothers two of his dreams which foretell that he is destined to rule over them, increasing their envy and hatred towards him.

Simeon and Levi plot to kill him, but Reuben suggests that they throw him into a pit instead, intending to come back later and save him. While Joseph is in the pit, Judah has him sold to a band of passing Ishmaelites. The brothers dip Joseph's special coat in the blood of a goat and show it to their father, leading him to believe that his most beloved son was devoured by a wild beast.

Judah marries and has three children. The eldest, Er, dies young and childless, and his wife, Tamar, is given in levirate marriage to the second son, Onan. Onan sins by spilling his seed, and he too meets an early death. Judah is reluctant to have his third son marry her. Determined to have a child from Judah's family, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute and seduces Judah himself. Judah hears that his daughter-in-law has become pregnant and orders her executed for harlotry, but when Tamar produces some personal effects he left with her as a pledge for payment, he publicly admits that he is the father. Tamar gives birth to twin sons, Peretz (an ancestor of King David) and Zerach.

Joseph is taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, the minister in charge of Pharaoh's slaughterhouses. G-d blesses everything he does, and soon he is made overseer of all his master's property. Potiphar's wife desires the handsome and charismatic lad; when Joseph rejects her advances, she tells her husband that the Hebrew slave tried to force himself on her, and has him thrown into prison. Joseph gains the trust and admiration of his jailers, who appoint him to a position of authority in the prison administration.

In prison, Joseph meets Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, both incarcerated

for offending their royal master. Both have disturbing dreams, which Joseph interprets; in three days, he tells them, the butler will be released and the baker hanged. Joseph asks the butler to intercede on his behalf with Pharaoh. Joseph's predictions are fulfilled, but the butler forgets all about Joseph and does nothing for him.

### [Shabbat Chanukah Haftarah in a Nutshell: Zechariah 2:14 – 4:7](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/598085/jewish/Shabbat-Chanukah-Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

[https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/598085/jewish/Shabbat-Chanukah-Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/598085/jewish/Shabbat-Chanukah-Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm)

This haftarah is read on Shabbat Chanukah as it contains a vision of the golden Temple Menorah.

This prophecy was communicated by Zechariah shortly before the building of the Second Temple. The haftarah opens with a vivid depiction of the joy that will prevail when G-d will return to Jerusalem: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for, behold! I will come and dwell in your midst, says the L-rd."

The prophet then describes a scene in the Heavenly Court: Satan was seeking to incriminate Joshua, the first High Priest to serve in the Second Temple, because of the "soiled garments" (i.e. sins) he was wearing. G-d himself defends the High Priest: "And the Lord said to Satan: The Lord shall rebuke you, O Satan; the Lord who chose Jerusalem shall rebuke you. Is [Joshua] not a brand plucked from fire?" I.e., how dare Satan prosecute an individual who endured the hardships of exile? "And He raised His voice and said to those standing before him, saying, 'Take the filthy garments off him.' And He said to him, 'See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I have clad you with clean garments.'"

G-d then proceeds to outline the rewards awaiting Joshua if he and his descendents follow G-d's ways. The ultimate reward is, "Behold! I will bring My servant, the Shoot, " an allusion to Moshiach, the Shoot of David.

Zechariah then describes a vision of a golden seven-branched Menorah. An angel interprets the meaning of this vision: "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel [descendent of King David, one of the protagonists in the building of the Second Temple], 'Not by military force and not by physical strength, but by My spirit,' says the Lord of Hosts." Meaning that Zerubbabel's descendent, Moshiach, will have no difficulty in his task, it will be as simple as lighting a menorah.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

### [Speech Therapy: Vayeshev by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks](https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/vayeshev/speech-therapy/)

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/vayeshev/speech-therapy/>

From Vayeshev to the end of the book of Bereishit we read the story of Joseph and his brothers. From the very beginning we are plunged into a drama of sibling rivalry that seems destined to end in tragedy.

All the elements are there, and it begins with ominous parental favouritism. Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons. The Torah says this was because "he had been born to him in his old age." But we also know it was because Joseph was the first son of his beloved Rachel, who had been infertile for many years.

Jacob gave this favouritism a visible symbol, the richly ornamented robe or coat of many colours that he commissioned for him. The mere sight of this coat served as constant provocation to the brothers. In addition there were the bad reports Joseph brought to his father about his half-brothers, the children of the handmaids. And by the fourth verse of the parsha we read the following:

When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him, *velo yachlu dabro le-shalom. [Gen. 37:4](#)*

What is the meaning of this last phrase? Here are some of the standard translations:

They could not speak a kind word to him.

They could not speak peacefully to him.

They could not speak to him on friendly terms.

Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz, however, recognised that the Hebrew construction is strange. Literally it means, "they could not speak him to peace." What might this mean? Rabbi Eybeschutz refers us to the command in [Vayikra 19:17](#):

You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely reprimand your neighbour and not bear sin because of him. [Lev. 19:17](#)

This is how Maimonides interprets this command as it relates to interpersonal relations:

When a person sins against another, the injured party should not hate the offender and keep silent . . . it is his duty to inform the offender and say to him, why did you do this to me? Why did you sin against me in this matter? . . . If the offender repents and pleads for forgiveness, he should be forgiven. *Hilchot Deot 6:6*

Rabbi Eybeschutz's point is simple. Had the brothers been able to speak to Joseph they might have told him of their anger at his talebearing, and of their distress at seeing the many-coloured coat. They might have spoken frankly about their sense of humiliation at the way their father favoured Rachel over their mother Leah, a

favouritism that was now being carried through into a second generation. Joseph might have come to understand their feelings. It might have made him more modest or at least more thoughtful. But *lo yachlu dabro le-shalom*. They simply couldn't bring themselves to speak. As Nachmanides writes, on the command: You shall not hate your brother in your heart:

“Those who hate tend to hide their hate in their heart.”

We have here an instance of one of the Torah's great insights, that conversation is a form of conflict resolution, whereas the breakdown of speech is often a prelude to violent revenge.

The classic case is that of Absalom and Amnon, two half-brothers who were sons of king David. In a shocking episode, Amnon rapes Absalom's sister Tamar:

Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate tunic that she wore; she put her hand to her head and went off, weeping as she went.

And Absalom, her brother, said to her, “Has your brother Amnon been with you? For now, my sister, be silent; he is your brother. Do not take this affair to heart.”

And Tamar remained, forlorn, in the house of her brother Absalom. When King David heard all about this affair, he was absolutely livid. And Absalom would not speak a word to Amnon, neither good nor bad, for Absalom despised Amnon for having violated Tamar, his sister. [2 Samuel 13:19-22](#)

Absalom maintained his silence for two years. Then he invited all of David's sons for a feast at the time of sheep-shearing, and ordered his servants to wait until Amnon was drunk and then kill him, which they did.

Hate grows in silence. It did with Absalom. It did with Joseph's brothers. Before the chapter ends, we see them plot to kill Joseph, then throw him into a pit, and then sell him into slavery. It is a terrible story and led directly to the Israelites' exile and slavery in Egypt.

The Talmud ([Brachot 26b](#)) uses the phrase, *ein sichah ela tefillah*, which literally means, “Conversation is a form of prayer,” because in opening ourselves up to the human other, we prepare ourselves for the act of opening ourselves up with the Divine Other, which is what prayer is: a conversation with God.

Conversation does not, in and of itself, resolve conflict. Two people who are open with one another may still have clashing desires or competing claims. They may simply not like one another. There is no law of predetermined harmony in the

human domain. But conversation means that we recognise one another's humanity. At its best it allows us to engage in role reversal, seeing the world from the other's point of view. Think of how many real and intractable conflicts, whether in the personal or political domain, might be transformed if we could do that.

In the end Joseph and his brothers had to live through real trauma before they were able to recognise one another's humanity, and much of the rest of their story – the longest single narrative in the Torah – is about just that.

Judaism is about the God who cannot be seen, who can only be heard; about the God who created the universe with words and whose first act of kindness to the first human being was to teach him how to use words. Jews, even highly secular Jews, have often been preoccupied with language. Wittgenstein understood that philosophy is about language.

Levi Strauss saw cultures as forms of language. Noam Chomsky and Steven Pinker pioneered study of the language instinct. George Steiner has written about translation and the limits of language.

The Sages were eloquent in speaking about the dangers of *lashon hara*, "evil speech," the power of language to fracture relationships and destroy trust and goodwill. But there is evil silence as well as evil speech. It is no accident that at the very beginning of the most fateful tale of sibling rivalry in Bereishit, the role – specifically the failure – of language is alluded to, in a way missed by virtually all translations. Joseph's brothers might have "spoken him to peace" had they been open, candid and willing to communicate. Speech broke down at the very point where it was needed most.

Words create; words reveal; words command; words redeem. Judaism is a religion of holy words. For words are the narrow bridge across the abyss between soul and soul, between two human beings, and between humanity and God.

Language is the redemption of solitude, and the mender of broken relationships. However painful it is to speak about our hurt, it is more dangerous not to do so. Joseph and his brothers might have been reconciled early on in their lives, and thus spared themselves, their father, and their descendants, much grief. Revealing pain is the first step to healing pain.

Speech is a path to peace.

[No To Nekamah: Vayeshev by Rabbi Ian Chesir-Teran](https://truah.org/resources/ian-chesir-teran-vayeshev-moraltorah_2023/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=7b2a6b91-53f0-4848-9cf6-ff9e5b3901b4)

[https://truah.org/resources/ian-chesir-teran-vayeshev-moraltorah\\_2023/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=7b2a6b91-53f0-4848-9cf6-ff9e5b3901b4](https://truah.org/resources/ian-chesir-teran-vayeshev-moraltorah_2023/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=7b2a6b91-53f0-4848-9cf6-ff9e5b3901b4)

Since Hamas' horrific Oct. 7 attack, some Israelis, like the couple in [this video](#), have been hanging large signs publicly calling for revenge. *Nekamah* in Hebrew. It's a loaded word here in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Why? Because *nekamah* has been a battle cry for vigilante violence against Palestinians for years. Israeli Jewish settlers spray paint the word, often with a Star of David, on Palestinian cars after slashing their tires. On nearby boulders after uprooting Palestinian olive trees. On Palestinian homes and mosques after ransacking and torching them.

*Nekamah*. It's a powerful impulse, born of raw pain, deep fear, and inconsolable anger. It goes beyond self-defense. It's self-perpetuating — the "re" in revenge isn't there for nothing. *Nekama's* intentionally disproportionate terror and violence fuel wars and inflict traumas lasting generations.

But crimes committed out of *nekamah* are crimes. Immoral acts committed out of *nekamah* are immoral. Right?

Unfortunately, our tradition is equivocal about this. The Torah is filled with *nekamah* stories and statutes: The commandment to obliterate all descendants of Amalek, whenever and wherever they may be. ([Deuteronomy 25:17-19](#)) The last chapters of the Book of Esther, where Jews kill non-Jews with impunity. The story of Shimon and Levi murdering all the men of Shechem to avenge the rape of their sister, Dinah, in last week's parshah. ([Genesis 34](#)) Repeated calls for an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot. ([Exodus 21:24](#))

*Nekamah*. I hurt, so you will hurt. I suffered, so you will suffer more.

The Chanukah "Al Hanisim" prayer that we add to the Amidah each of the eight days covers the holiday's story with *nekamah*, too. It poetically describes how God took up the Israelites' grievance ("ravta et ribam"), judged their claim ("danta et dinam"), and avenged their wrong ("nakamta et nikmatan"), decisively defeating the wicked Greeks.

Luckily, there are counterexamples to *nekamah* in the Torah that we can choose to learn from and follow instead. The same verse that commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves also forbids us from taking revenge. ([Leviticus 19:18](#)) God commands the Israelites to establish cities of refuge to protect manslaughterers from *nekamah*. ([Numbers 35:9-29](#)) Jacob doesn't bless Shimon and Levi on his deathbed; he curses them for their "lawless" *nekamah* against Shechem. ([Genesis 49:5-7](#)) The Talmud reinterprets "an eye for an eye" as a metaphor for financial restitution. ([Bava Kama 83b et seq.](#))



There's also the story of Joseph, which we begin reading in this week's Torah portion, *Vayeshev*. For all his self-grandeur and physical beauty, Joseph is used and abused by the people around him. Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery. (Genesis 37:18-28) Potifar's wife falsely accuses Joseph of rape, leading Potifar to wrongfully imprison him. (39:7-20) Pharaoh's pardoned cupbearer forgets to petition for Joseph's release from jail. (40:9-15, 23)

Joseph could justify taking *nekamah* against any or all of them. But he doesn't. Instead, he keeps on keeping on. Joseph continues interpreting dreams. (41:25-36) Faithful to Pharaoh, he implements plans that save Egypt and its neighbors from extreme famine. (41:47-57) When Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, he quickly allays their fears of *nekamah*: "Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me [into slavery]; it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you." (45:5) Joseph invites the entire family to come live with him in Egypt, under his protection, providing for all of their needs. (45:10-11)

For his refusal to let violence make him violent, his refusal to let injustice make him unjust, and for showing that not all "hurt people hurt people," I claim Joseph as a role model.

Tamar, a 19-year-old member of Kibbutz Be'eri, where more than 100 Israelis were massacred by Hamas on Oct. 7, is also a role model. She is not the Viceroy of Egypt with the power Joseph had to order or withhold *nekamah*. But Tamar uses the power she does have, as a survivor, to reject *nekamah*. [Listen for yourself](#). After recalling the horrors she personally experienced and witnessed, she calls all calls for *nekamah* shameful: "*Bushah! Bushah!*" (2:40) Tamar pleads instead for peace. Her voice is brave and powerful, raw and emotional, moral and decidedly Jewish.

Tamar's voice is only one among many. Other **survivors** and **relatives of those killed** or kidnapped reject the idea that more force and more violence is the answer.

This Chanukah, let's choose to follow the examples of Joseph and Tamar, and say no to *nekamah*. When the time comes to say the "Al Hanissim" prayer, let's skip the vengeful words "*nakamta et nikmatam*." I'll bet dollars on jelly donuts that you won't miss them. When someone demands *nekamah* against Palestinians, let's acknowledge and validate their loss, hurt, pain, suffering, fear, and anger. But then let's also acknowledge that *nekamah* begets only more *nekamah*. It is not, and never will be, a substitute for the real work, the hard work, the really hard work, we all must do in pursuit of equality, freedom, social justice, dignity, self-determination, and peace. (***Rabbi Ian Chesir-Teran is T'ruah's Rabbinic***)

***Educator in Israel. He is a member of Kibbutz Hannaton, located in Israel's Lower Galilee.)***

[Tamar, Our Mother: Vayeshev by Yael Landman](https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/tamar-our-mother/)  
<https://www.jtsa.edu/torah/tamar-our-mother/>

Parashat Vayeshev begins the story of Joseph, Jacob's favorite son. But just after this narrative kicks off, the text veers for the length of a chapter into the story of another of Jacob's sons, Judah, as well as Judah's three sons and his daughter-in-law Tamar. Just as the Joseph story is foundational for the broader narrative of B'nei Yisrael—the children of Jacob who become the Israelites—the story of Judah and Tamar is foundational as well.

Judah has three sons, Er, Onan, and Shelah. Judah arranges the marriage of his eldest to a woman named Tamar, about whom no other details are provided. Is she Israelite or Canaanite? What is she like? The text does not tell us. What we do learn is that Er displeases God, and so God causes him to die. Judah then instructs Onan to marry Tamar and bear offspring that will be attributed to his deceased brother, apparently a case of yibum (levirate marriage). But Onan does not like this idea, and so he deliberately prevents Tamar from becoming pregnant. Of course, this displeases God, and so Onan dies as well.

At this point, Judah tells his daughter-in-law to remain in her father's house until Shelah is old enough to get married. But the Torah also gives us a glimpse into his thoughts, and we learn that Judah thinks Tamar is the cause of his sons' deaths and does not truly intend to wed the two. Tamar is left in limbo until one day, she takes matters into her own hands. Judah's wife has died, and Tamar learns where Judah will be at a particular time. She disguises her face with a veil and poses as a prostitute at the entrance to a place called Enaim, and Judah takes the bait. Tamar cleverly requests a few of Judah's possessions as collateral, until he will send a goat to pay her. But instead of collecting payment, she holds on to these possessions. Three months later, when it becomes clear that Tamar is pregnant and Judah hears this news, he assumes the worst about her and demands that she be burned to death. This is when Tamar produces the items he had given her, at which point Judah realizes exactly what has happened, and also perceives her pure motivations. Judah then famously pronounces, צדקה ממני—she is more in the right than I.

At the end of this story, Tamar gives birth to twins, Peretz and Zerah. We can connect this notice with a genealogy at the end of the book of Ruth, which draws a direct line from Tamar and Judah's son Peretz to the future king David.

What are we to make of Tamar, a woman of ambiguous origins, who poses as a



prostitute and tricks her father-in-law into sleeping with her in order to preserve his lineage?

I suggest that we consider Tamar in the broader context of the imahot—the matriarchs, who are classically understood as including Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, though we can also note the invisible mothers who stand alongside them—Hagar, Bilhah, and Zilpah. As a mother in Genesis, and direct ancestor of the future king of Israel, to what extent might Tamar belong to this club?

At first glance, there are some important differences between Tamar and the classic canon of matriarchs. For one thing, unlike Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, Tamar does not seem to be related to the ancestral family; instead, her lineage is not clear. There are no patriarchal negotiations over her marriage, like we see with Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, and no fairy tale meeting at a well. She does not speak to or invoke the name of God (at least, not in the biblical text itself, although the midrash adds prayer to her story). Tamar gets pregnant immediately, without needing to pray to God and without a reference to God opening her womb.

And yet, Tamar may not suffer from infertility, but she is prevented from becoming pregnant through divine intervention, in the form of God killing her husbands and through the intervention of men. Like the matriarchs who engage surrogates to try and have children unconventionally, Tamar takes initiative and creatively devises a plan to bear children in an unconventional way.

While Tamar does not meet her husband or a matchmaker at a well, she does encounter Judah at a place called Enaim, which may be translated as “two springs,” i.e., sources of water.

We can also note that Judah encounters Tamar immediately after he finishes mourning his wife, in [Genesis 38:12](#), where the verse uses the term נִנְחַם—“he was consoled”—the same verb used of Isaac’s consolation after the death of his mother upon marrying Rebecca.

The midrash in [Genesis Rabbah 85](#) identifies commonalities between the stories of Tamar and Rebecca: “There were two who covered themselves with a veil, Tamar and Rebecca, and the two also gave birth to twins.” Just as Rebecca covers herself with a veil in the story where she meets her husband Isaac, Tamar covers herself with a veil for her encounter with Judah. And just as Rebecca gives birth to twins—Jacob and Esau—Tamar gives birth to twins, Peretz and Zerah. The midrash explicitly connects Tamar to the matriarch Rebecca.

In the early Jewish text *Biblical Antiquities*, Tamar appears in the context of a different foundational story, the prelude to the Exodus. When Pharaoh demands

that all Israelite male babies be killed, Amram (Moses's father) is portrayed as the protagonist who encourages the Israelites to disobey him. Amram gives a speech in which he urges the Israelites to be like Tamar:

*"For when our wives conceive, they will not be recognized as pregnant until three months have passed, as also **our mother Tamar** did. For her intent was not fornication but being unwilling to separate from the sons of Israel she reflected and said, 'It is better for me to die for having intercourse with my father-in-law, than to have intercourse with Gentiles.' And she hid the fruit of her womb until the third month ...And her intent saved her of all danger. Now therefore let us also do the same."*

Because Tamar acted with courage and with honorable intentions, God saved her. Amram urges the people not to despair, but to be like Tamar. Amram calls her "our mother Tamar"—in Hebrew, we would say תמר אמנו—and emphasizes her maternal role and her devotion to perpetuating the Israelites, despite the danger involved.

While this text certainly embellishes on the Torah itself, I propose that we consider the way that Genesis Rabbah and Biblical Antiquities frame Tamar: as Rebecca-like, as "our mother," as a model of bravery and commitment to B'nei Yisrael. Tamar is in many respects unlike the matriarchs of Genesis, yet we can grant her a place among them. In doing so, we may also expand our idea of who is central to our story, and who our role models ought to be. *(Yael Landman is Assistant Professor of Bible at JTS)*

### Parshat Vayeshev/Chanuka: Finding Miracles in the Darkness by Dr. Kenneth Brander

<https://ots.org.il/parshat-vayeshev-chanuka-finding-miracles-in-the-darkness/>

Chanuka feels different this year. The vanquishing of our enemies that occurred in the days of the Maccabees during their war against the Greeks seems distant this Chanukah. As we light our flickering candles, still shrouded in the darkness of the murderous pogrom on the seventh of October, 136 hostages from 10 months to 83 years old still being held in Gaza, and the tragic aftermath of so many fallen, how can we possibly rejoice and celebrate this year?

Uncharacteristically, the lighting of the Chanuka candles is accompanied by two *brachot* (three on the first night). Following the standard *bracha* for *mitzva* performance, one recites the blessing of *She'asa Nissim*, giving thanks to God for the miracles performed "in those days, at this time." Yet if we carefully examine the formulation appearing in Rambam's *Mishneh Torah (Hilchot Megillah v'Chanuka 3:4)*, we will notice that some of the

manuscripts have a slightly different version, which reads "*bayamim hahem uvizman hazeh*," which translates as "in those days *and* at this time." With the addition of a single letter *vav*, these editions of Rambam offer an entirely new meaning to this *bracha*: that just as miracles took place long ago, miracles continue to surround us in every generation to the present day.

This year, inspired by the miracles to which we have all been witness, I will be adopting the alternate version of the text, to give thanks for the wonders all around us, "*bayamim hahem uvizman hazeh*," "in those days *and* at this time."

Indeed, these have been unimaginably difficult weeks for the families of the murdered and the kidnapped, for the fallen, wounded and the displaced, for the soldiers serving in every corner of this country, and for all of Am Yisrael. But even within this darkness, the light of unity and volunteerism is shining brightly. This year, I am celebrating the miracle of solidarity. Grassroots efforts have popped up overnight like nothing Israel has ever seen. Meals have been distributed, people have been welcomed into homes, and thousands of reservists, 130% of those called up, have reported for duty. The amount of donations: food, clothing, toys, rides, visits, hugs, army supplies, medications, and more, that have been offered to those in need has been astounding. Our collective resolve in the face of the horrors is nothing short of miraculous, and a reminder of what we are capable of when we band together.

And I am celebrating the miracle of heroism. In the face of the horrors of October 7th, so many heroes have risen to defend our brethren. I carry with me the memory of OTS alumnus Elhanan Kalmanson z"l, who drove with his brother and nephew to Be'eri that Shabbat Simchat Torah morning on their own and managed to rescue dozens of victims. I am thinking of Aner Elyakim Shapiro z"l, who protected a packed public bomb shelter by throwing outside hand grenades terrorists had tossed in to kill those huddled inside and fell on the last one to absorb impact to protect others. And at the same time, those continuing to celebrate life, including Aner's sister who got engaged just last week, have exhibited tremendous courage to push on despite the pain and the grief. This Chanukah, I bask in the light of the heroism of our soldiers – including countless members of the OTS family. The courage of their families and of all those maintaining the homefront is as much a divine gift as the Maccabean initiative.

And I am celebrating this state, and what it means to live in the Jewish homeland in the 21st Century. Even in the wake of the largest pogrom since the Holocaust, we cannot lose sight of our good fortune. Never again can we be decimated, for

we have a land of our own and the resolve needed to defend it. To witness the return of the Jewish people to our sacred homeland is a living miracle, and it is the anchor of our confidence in these uncertain times.

*Bayamim hahem uvizman hazeh.* In the midst of the grief and the fear, there are miracles all around us, just as there were long ago. Like the Maccabees, we face a challenging threat, but we are resolutely committed to our cause. As we move forward, our challenge is to not lose sight of these miracles, to be inspired by them, empowered to persevere until the darkness of this moment is overtaken by a great, shining light.

No matter what comes, we can face it together. *(Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone)*

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### Yahrtzeits

Ilisia Kissner remembers Steve's father, Abe Kissner on Sat. Dec.9<sup>th</sup>.

Blossom Primer remembers Irwin's mother, Sarah Primer on Mon Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>.

Stuart Sender remembers his father, Jack Sender on Mon. Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>

Harriet Hessdorf remembers her father, Herbert Achtentuch on Tues. Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> and her mother, Miriam Achtentuch on Thurs. Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>.