

TEFILAT YAMIM



# PARSHAT YITRO

20 Shevat 5786 - 7 February 2026



*Dear Community Family,*

About a year ago, Hamas released a chilling statement. They claimed that a hostage had been killed. They circulated blurred images of a body wrapped in a shroud. One image showed a tattoo that

appeared identical to that of Daniella Gilboa, a young IDF lookout soldier taken captive near the Gaza border. Many feared the worst. Rumors spread. Despair crept in.

But Daniella Gilboa was not dead.

On January 25, 2025, she came home. Days later, she was singing at a celebration marking the release of the lookout soldiers from Beilinson

Hospital. On February 2, she shared her story publicly. She wrote that what sustained her was faith, prayer, and Jewish practice. She thanked the people of Israel for refusing to believe the lie that she was gone.

"I didn't want to despair and say goodbye," she wrote. "So instead I prayed and believed with my whole heart that my end was not there, in that bomb shelter. I prayed for all the girls with me, because I felt there was nothing greater I could do. I knew that the only thing that could save us was faith."

That week, Daniella and the other released soldiers recited Birkat Hagomel, the blessing said after surviving great danger. "This was the moment I waited for since October 7," she wrote. "To thank G-d for saving me against all odds." And then she added words

that should echo in every Jewish heart. *"Who knows better than me that you, the people of Israel, give the hostages a small light in an endless darkness."*

With that in mind, let us turn to the opening of this week's Torah portion and the story of Yitro.

The Torah tells us that Yitro, a Midianite priest and the father-in-law of Moshe, heard all that G-d had done for Bnei Yisrael, how He took them out of Egypt. He left behind his status, wealth, and honor and traveled into a barren desert to join a newborn nation.

The Gemara asks a simple but profound question. What exactly did Yitro hear that made him come?

The sages offer three answers. 1) He heard about the war with Amalek. 2) He heard about the giving of the Torah. 3) He heard

about the splitting of the sea.

At first glance, this is puzzling. The Torah itself already told us what he heard. Why do the sages debate it? The answer is that Yitro did not lack information. He lacked a reason to uproot his entire life. He could have stayed where he was, admired the Jewish story from afar, followed it like a spectator. Why did he need to become part of it?

Rabbi Yehoshua says Yitro heard about Amalek. Amalek represents the mystery of irrational hatred. A nation that posed no threat was attacked simply for existing. There was no land dispute, no political strategy, no economic motive. Just hatred. **Hatred without logic, without cause, without cure.**

Yitro understood something terrifying and profound. When a

---

people are hated simply for being who they are, there must be something deeply holy about them. History has confirmed this again and again. The enemies of the Jews have always been enemies of humanity itself. Tyrants, murderers, and destroyers of their own people. Seeing who hates Jews reveals who Jews are.

Rabbi Elazar says Yitro heard about the giving of the Torah. Not only that Jews are hated, but that they are loved. Loved enough to be entrusted with a moral compass that does not shift with fashion or headlines. A truth that remains steady while the world argues over right and wrong, dignity and decency, humanity and cruelty.

The Torah teaches calm amid noise. It teaches clarity when values are confused. It teaches that every human being is created

in the image of G-d, that no one is above the law, that compassion is strength, that holiness belongs in daily life. Yitro saw a nation shaped by education, charity, justice, family, Shabbat, prayer, and responsibility. He saw a blueprint for human dignity that civilizations still borrow from today. He fell in love with that vision.

Rabbi Eliezer goes further. Yitro heard about the splitting of the sea. He understood that the Jewish story defies nature itself. Seas do not split. Empires do not fall overnight. Small nations do not outlive superpowers. And yet the Jewish people cross every sea placed before them.

Yitro realized that *eternity does not belong to spectators.*

And now, thousands of years later, **we see it again.**

We watched young women like Daniella Gilboa, Agam Berger, and Liri Albag emerge from captivity, from darkness that most of us cannot imagine, and sing. Not curse. Not collapse. Sing. Bless G-d. Thank Him. *Carry faith out of hell itself.*

### **This is the people Yitro saw.**

We were born into this story. Yitro chose it at great cost. The question now turns to us. Will we choose it actively? Will we live it with pride, courage, and faith?

May we draw strength from our sisters and brothers who remind us who we are. May we be worthy of the light we carry. And may we continue to give hope, even a small one, in the face of vast darkness.

With deep love and faith,

*Rav Mendel Wuensch*

---

## Shabbat Schedule

### Friday

4:57 PM Candle Lighting

5:10 PM Mincha & Kabbalat Shabbat - Dvar Torah by Jonny Newfield

### Shabbat Day

8:30 AM Shacharit - Dvar Torah by Rabbi Liad Braude

9:45-10:30 AM Kid's Program

10:30 AM Kiddush

11:00 AM Kolot Yamim: Simon Johnson on "How To Meet G-d"

4:50 PM Mincha Followed By Seudat Shlishit "Raava D'Raavin" With Divrei Torah  
From Oscar Seidel

5:52 PM Arvit

5:57 PM Shabbat Ends

---

## Weekday Events & Lectures Schedule

**9-11 AM Monday** Men's Kollel By Rav Mendel Wuensch  
@ Young Israel Of Poleg, Hanurit St. 33, Poleg

**8 PM Monday** Sages Of The Ages Series On "HaRav Ovadiah Yosef" By Rav Mendel Wuensch @ Briga Towers, Ehud Manor 7 Beit Knesset/Tenants Room

**5-6 PM Tuesday** Women's Kollel & Youth Programming For All Ages With Oryah Seminary By Rebbetzin Itty @ Tefilat Yamim

**11 AM Wednesday** Experience Prayer Series By Rav Mendel Wuensch  
@ Briga Towers, Ehud Manor 5, Tenants Room

## Kiddush Sponsors

Anat and Gabi Asher in memory of Gabi's Mother.

Melanie Glatt and Nicky & Jonny Newfield & family in celebration of Martin's 80th birthday. (Our thanks to Martin for the additional, upgraded whiskey selection)

Whiskey sponsor by Lianne Solomons and Denise Buchen in honour of the Yahrtzeit of their Mother, Annie Kate Silver.

---

## **“Sages of the Ages: Harav Ovadiah Yosef” Sponsors**

Hannah and Warren Persky and Lynne and Stephen Shaffer in memory of Warren's Father, Eliezer Ben Moshe, and Lynne's Mother, Gittel bat Yehuda.

### **Weekday Minyan Schedule**

**7:30 AM Shachrit** @ Beit Chabad Ir Yamim

**5:10 PM Mincha/Maariv** @ Be Pharmacy On Piano

### **Contact Info**

Rav Mendel Wuensch - 053-8809063

Rebbetzin Itty Wuensch - 053-2551747

Rami Goldsmith - 054-6742284

Jonathan Gellis - 053-8236143

Location: Chaim Guri School, Corner of Beni Berman & Uzi Hitman Streets, Entrance  
On Uzi Hitman Street