

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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April 2015

Iyar 5775

SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting

🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)

For service times see page 3

24 & 25 April – 6 Iyar

🕒 Tazria - Metzora

🕒 5:26 – 🕒 6:15

1 & 2 May – 13 Iyar

🕒 Acharei - Kedoshim

🕒 5:20 – 🕒 6:09

8 & 9 May – 20 Iyar

🕒 Emor

🕒 5:15 – 🕒 6:05

15 & 16 May – 27 Adar

🕒 Behar - Bechukotai

🕒 5:11 – 🕒 6:01

RABBI'S MESSAGE

So now Pesach is over... The special dishes have been packed away and the mess cleared up. The kids have returned overseas and the wonderful two and three-day work-weeks are now history. It's back to work and back to normal...

Let us take stock. What can we account for? A few new stains on the once beautiful Seder tablecloth? Another inch or so around our waistline? Can we truly say that we have benefited from the holiday?

I once heard a beautiful Yiddish saying. After a festival, never state, *es iz farbay gegangen* a yom tov (a festival has just passed) but rather *es iz tzupekumen* a yom tov

(another festival has been added to our lives).

So now that Passover has passed over, how do we make sure it has actually added value to our lives? The month of Nissan has now come to an end. We have just entered the month of Iyar, one of the only months in our calendar without any festivals at all, major or minor. How do we ensure not to experience an anti-climax and being left with a big void?

A similar question occurred to our Ancestors on the morning after they had been liberated from Egyptian bondage: "So what? True, we are no longer slaves to Pharaoh. We are free, but are we really any better off?"

Our forefathers knew that the big void would soon be filled. Moshe had promised them that shortly after the great Exodus there would follow an even greater revelation. At Mount Sinai their newfound freedom would be given meaning and purpose when they received the Torah. They were promised that this would happen exactly seven weeks, or 49 days, after they left Mitzrayim. And so they began to count. From one to forty nine, until the Almighty appeared to them and gave the Israelites the new dimension in life for which they had been waiting.

The month of Iyar may not have the merit of a festival. But it has the distinction of being the only month when a special mitzvah is performed on every one of its days: the Counting of the Omer.

We re-enact our forefathers' experience in the desert by counting the days leading up to Shavuot. Beginning the 2nd day of Pesach, we call out, each night, "Today is one day of the Omer," "Today is two days of the Omer," etc.

We do not count "first day," "second day," "third day," for this would simply mark the passage of time. We want to stress that *es iz tzupekumen* a tog (a day has been added to our lives) and not that another day *iz farbay gegangen*.

Every day, we are rising, higher than the day before. We should not be feeling an anti-climax after Pesach. For each night, as we count the Omer, we are building on the accomplishments of the previous day and moving further. We are getting closer to Shavuot, the Festival of the Gift of the Torah. This is when we are sure to receive the spiritual fulfilment for which we have been waiting. Another festival will be *tzupekumen* to our lives.

Shavuot this year is on 24/25 May

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

Most psychology books paint the picture of a young child jumping, expecting to be caught by their parent, who doesn't catch them, as the first experience of being let down by someone they trust.

We all have our own experience of being let down. Not having our expectations met by someone, be it a teacher, doctor, friend or even a family member. Most times our reaction is to be upset, hurt or angry by the person who let us down.

We now find ourselves in the Omer period. The main reason for the practice of mourning during this time is to remind us of the plague that killed so many of Rabbi Akiva's students. Every year I wonder why and how this is relevant to my life.

Chazal tell us that the cause of the plague was simply a lack of respect that Rabbi Akiva's students had for each other. I always look for a way to understand this. The students of Rabbi Akiva were great and learned people. No doubt they were well versed in mitzvot, so what could

it mean that they showed a lack of respect for each other?

Practically, in our lives, when is it that we decent, kind and good people don't show respect for each other? Perhaps, one example, is in the way we respond when we are let down by others. Possibly, we need to look past our disappointment and see the human being behind the behaviour. Forgive them, as we list the myriad of responsibilities, difficulties and challenges that they may have in their own lives. Excuse them! Bask in the promise that Hashem uses the same measuring stick that we use to judge others when He judges us.

I am going to try that this month. May we all be blessed with an abundance of ahavat yisrael!

Have a good month.

Rivky

SHACHARIT (A.M.)	
Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
19/05 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00	
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)	
Sunday to Friday	5:30
from 03/05	5:15
Shabbat	5:15
from 02/05	5:00

DVAR TORAH

I AM G-D, YOUR HEALER

Chaya Strasberg
(www.chabad.org)

I sit here on my living room sofa, sipping tea. Now that the chaos of Passover has somewhat abated, I have time to reflect on the past month. I scan my organized bookshelves and feel relief at having let go of so much clutter. My mind too feels free. I reflect on time spent with family, eating matzah, the bread of faith and healing. As I sit alone, I feel the quietness of my living room. I will begin my regular day-to-day routine tomorrow. I wonder, how I can bring this freedom I experienced over Passover into my day-to-day life?

The month of Iyar is coming. We have begun counting the Omer, which takes us on a 49-day journey. Each day will cleanse another one of our emotional attributes, so that we'll be ready to receive the Torah on Shavuot, the 50th day.

Although the Omer spans three Hebrew months, the month of Iyar is the only month during which we count the Omer every single day. Each day, we set aside time to think about our emotional and spiritual health, and how to prepare ourselves to receive the Torah.

The Hebrew letters that spell the month of Iyar are an acronym for the phrase

“Ani Hashem Rofecha”—“I am G-d, your healer.” The fact that we have a special mitzvah of personal growth for the entire month clearly shows the healing potential carried within it. Yet there is something even more unique about the healing that takes place in this month, as G-d is always a compassionate healer the entire year. The month of Iyar reveals the aspect of health that is G-dly and above logic. When a person goes to the doctor, the doctor diagnoses the illness and provides medicine to cure it. Many medicines just treat the symptoms of the illness, not the root of the illness itself. The medicines may have side effects and can interfere with many other functions of the body. G-d, however, heals the root of the illness, a healing so complete it is as if the illness was never there.

In Kabbalah, the word “yad” is used to refer to G-d’s healing hand. There are a number of different stages of healing: In G-d’s “surgery,” He opens the site of illness, removes the damaged tissue, cleans and heals the site of the wound, closes the skin and then heals the skin so there is no scar or sign of illness. This final level of healing, revealing absolute health, is the level of healing we experience in the month of Iyar.

Jasa was distraught after hearing that his son would have to have his leg

amputated due to rapidly spreading cancer. A friend advised that he call the Lubavitcher Rebbe for a blessing. Rabbi Hodakov, the Rebbe’s secretary, answered the phone, and after hearing the details of the dire circumstances, relayed the Rebbe’s message that Jasa should call back on Friday with good news. Sure enough, at the next X-ray, there was not a sign of cancer in sight. This is just one example of the power of the Rebbe’s blessing. Through his deep connection to G-d, the Rebbe was able to bring the level of complete healing into reality.

Through the spiritual and emotional process of Iyar, we too can manifest this power to bring true, unlimited, revealed G-dly healing into this world.

Counting the Omer is a powerful tool that enables us to fulfill this massive task. During the days of the Omer, many of the students of the sage Rabbi Akiva died in a plague, due to their lack of respect for each other. On the 33rd day of the Omer, the plague stopped. Therefore, during the Omer, and especially on the 33rd day, we focus on loving our fellow Jews the same way that we love ourselves.

In the prayer following the daily counting of the Omer, we ask G-d that though our counting and through our emotional work

on the particular attribute of that day, “abundance should be drawn down into all the worlds to enable our souls to be rectified.” “All the worlds” refers to the Kabbalistic concept of *seder hishtalshelut*, “the order of evolution,” the chain of worlds from heaven to earth, which are animated by G-d’s light. The G-dly light emanates from its source and descends through each level of existence until it manifests in this physical world.

It is interesting to note the order of our request. We are asking that our personal work on our own characteristics influence not only ourselves, our families, our friends, and this physical world—we are asking that it draw down abundance from the source of creative light, influencing every level of existence. We do this because we know that the only way one can truly heal is by connecting to G-d at His source, thereby bringing down an unlimited abundance of healing, not only to one’s self and one’s family, but to the entirety of creation.

It is for this reason that during this time, we focus on loving our fellow Jews as ourselves. It is only through true unity that we can reach the state of ultimate health, with the revelation of Moshiach today.

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Mazeltov to Cecil and Tamara Levy and Leon and Rene Levy on the birth of a daughter and granddaughter.
- Mazaltov to Tzviki and Chaya Wolvovsky and to Rabbi and Rivky Chaikin on the birth of a

daughter and granddaughter

- Mazaltov to Shaun and Charlene Wingrin and to Ralph and Lynette Zulman on the birth of a daughter and granddaughter

ENGAGEMENTS

- Mazaltov to Annette Wolk on the engagement of her granddaughter, Jordy Meisler, to Joshua Sevit.

MARRIAGES

- Mazaltov to Alan and Karen Shkudsky and to

Arnold and Marion Rapp on the marriage of their son and grandson, Adam Cook, on 19th April.

BEREAVEMENTS

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- Rhona Gilbert on the death of her sister, Sylvia Davimes.
- Gert Elsbach on the death of his wife, Lily.



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**OXFORD'S HALL OF REMEMBRANCE**

The plaques in the Hall of Remembrance record the names and the date of death of departed loved ones. The lights on the plaques are lit on the Yartzeit and also whenever Yizkor is recited. A special Hazkara memorial prayer is also recited during Yizkor.

Cost of a plaque is R540 for the first plaque ordered, R360 for subsequent plaques