

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER February 2019

Adar I 5779

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SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting
🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)
For service times see page 3

1 & 2 February – 27 Shevat

🕒 Mishpatim
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:33

8 & 9 February – 4 Adar I

🕒 Terumah
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:28

15 & 16 February – 11 Adar I

🕒 Tetzaveh
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:23

22 & 23 February – 18 Adar I

🕒 Ki Tisa
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:16

1 & 2 March – 25 Adar I

🕒 Vayakhel (*Shekalim*)
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:09

RABBI'S MESSAGE

This happened some 50 years ago. Yet the memory comes back to me once a week. The pain and hurt is long gone. I cannot even remember the name of the perpetrator or even what he looked like and have definitely long forgiven him. But I still recall what occurred.

I was spending the summer at a sleepaway camp in the Ardennes, the mountain range in the Southern part of Belgium, near the French border. It was an overwhelming

experience for a young child from Brussels, whereas all the other young campers hailed from Antwerp and I had never met any of them.

One Shabbat morning, I noticed a group of boys gathered around one of the camp rabbis. As it turned out, every week he taught the youngsters some songs and at the end of the voluntary session, handed out some really delicious sweets. By the time I got there the singing was winding up and I joined for the end of the last song. Then the rabbi pulled out his bag of goodies and offered everyone, myself included, to partake. I politely refused, telling him I had just arrived and had not earned my reward, but he insisted.

Then it happened. One of the boys saw me choosing a colourful licorice and called out, "why is he getting candy? He never came to the singing, he only arrived now, clearly just for the treats!" That really hurt...

I can no longer remember the tune. But I do recall the words. "זה שבת" "יום השביעי" "This is the praise of the seventh day" which is said every Shabbat morning in our prayers, as part of the blessings before the Shema. And barely a week goes by when, as I recite those words, when my mind does not associate with that summer Shabbat morning in Wallonia.

No pain, no anger. Just a memory. And a reason to contemplate.

The offender has no doubt long forgotten about the intense shame he caused me that morning. Most likely he did not give it another thought subsequently.

But every Shabbat morning, I stop and think. Did I ever say something thoughtless and callous, that hurt or shamed someone? Did I then move on, never ever reflecting on it, leaving another person with a lingering memory for years or decades on?

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

Extreme temperatures have been part of nearly all of our conversations lately. For us here in Johannesburg, the sustained heat has been almost unbearable. Day after day of really high temperatures, together with returning to school and routine has really given us what to seriously kvetch about.

That is until we spoke to our children in other parts of the world. The Australian ones can barely move, with their days around 10 degrees hotter than ours. And the American ones, it has been so cold over there, apparently if you breathe in too deeply, your lungs will freeze solid!!!

I was chatting with one of my students when I had an epiphany I suddenly realised that it is the very same sun that is shining on the very same world. In one half of the world it is hot summer and on the other side of the world it is freezing cold. Whether hot or cold ... it all depends which way we are looking.

What a lesson! Brought to us from the first week of creation, the very same thing can be either hot or cold, depending on which way we look at it.

The choice is ours, to look at every situation and decide how we see it.

Wishing you a good month

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

SIXTY DAYS OF PURIM

by Yanky Tauber
(www.chabad.org)

This article will be something of a mixed-media piece. It'll start with a "Purim Torah," move on to more serious "Kabbalah" stuff, and conclude with an inspiring Chassidic teaching.

(A "Purim Torah" is what Torah scholars do for fun on Purim: a short exposition that sounds and feels like a typical piece of Talmud, yet is either patently absurd or just skewered enough to be taken seriously on Purim.)

First, the Purim Torah:

Question: We read in the Book of Esther how Haman desired "to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, from young to old, infants and woman, in a single day -- on the 13th of the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar" (Esther 3:13). But why was it so important to Haman that his evil decree be carried out "in a single day"? Would such a thing even have been logistically possible? Indeed, Haman initially cast lots to determine which month should be chosen as the time for the genocide of the Jews. Our sages tell us that when the lot fell on the month of Adar, Haman rejoiced: this was the month in which Moses had died (on Adar 7), surely a month that bodes ill for the Jews. Having hit on an apparently auspicious

month for his plans, why did Haman continue with his lot-throwing to pinpoint a particular day?

Answer: Haman was a keen student of Jewish history. He knew that the Jewish calendar is dotted with festivals celebrating the Jewish people's salvation from an enemy who sought to destroy them. What if -- Haman worried -- their G-d saves them again? If I designate the month of Adar for their destruction, they'll celebrate all month long!

Finale: In this, too, Haman's plan was foiled. When Mordechai and Esther institutionalized the celebration of the Purim miracle, they ordained not only the Purim observances of Adar 14 and 15, but also the commemoration of "the month that was transformed for them from sorrow to joy, from mourning to festivity" (Esther 9:22). Hence the Talmudic ruling, "when the month of Adar enters, increase in joy" (Talmud, Taanit 26b).

Now for the Kabbalah:

There are two ways in which the Jewish Calendar, and the nature of Jewish time, can be understood:

a) *The "Special Days" Approach:* The annual cycle consists of hundreds of days, most of which are of the ordinary, run-of-the-mill variety. Thankfully, these are punctuated by a number of special days -- festivals and holy days

imbued with special spiritual qualities. We trudge through the ordinary days, inspired and encouraged by the fact that we're never more than a few weeks away from a Passover or Purim, or -- at the very least -- a Lag BaOmer or a "New Year for Trees."

b) *The "Quality of the Month" Approach:* Jewish time is comprised not of days but of months, each possessing a distinct spiritual essence. The "special" days of the year are simply days on which the particular month's quality is more pronounced and actualized. Thus, Nissan is the "Month of Liberation," while Passover (observed on Nissan 15 to 22) is a week-long period in Nissan during which the month's freedom-quality is more accessible. Similarly, Sivan is the month of Wisdom, Shevat is the month of Growth and Fruitfulness, Elul is the month of Compassion, and so on. Each month has days in which the month's quality rises to the surface and manifests itself more than on the month's "ordinary" days; but these are differences of expression rather than of essence -- essentially, each day of the month equally possesses the month's unique spiritual properties. This is why many of the festivals and special dates of the Jewish calendar occur on the 15th of the month -- the night of the full moon, representing

the point at which the month's essence is in its most revealed and luminous state.

Adar is the month of Transformation. Adar transforms sorrow into joy, doubt into supra-knowledge, oblivion into exuberant being. Adar transforms a "scattered people" into a unified nation, and a moment of national weakness (when the Jewish people participated in Achashverosh's feast in the belief that allegiance to a mortal king will ensure their survival) into the greatest statement of Jewish commitment of all time (when for an entire year every single Jew remained faithful to his/her people and G-d, even as a decree of annihilation hung over the head of every Jew in the world). Adar transforms the most physical of activities -- eating and drinking -- into an affirmation of our bond with G-d.

So while two days in Adar -- the 14th and the 15th of the month -- are observed as "Purim," these represent the apex of an entire month of joyous transformation and transformative joy.

Finally, here's the inspiring chassidic thought we promised:

A month on the Jewish calendar includes either 29 or 30 days (reflecting the 29.5-day lunar cycle). But every two or three years -- seven times in a 19-year cycle, to be exact -- Adar

doubles in size: on these "pregnant years," as they're called, there's a 30-day "Adar I" followed by a 29-day "Adar II." In addition, 30th of Shevat is also the first of Adar I's Rosh Chodesh ("head of the month") days. This makes for a total of 60 "Adar days."

The Lubavitcher Rebbe points out that the number "60" represents the power of transformation. A rule-of-thumb in Torah law is the "nullified by sixty" principle. For example, if a piece of non-kosher food accidentally falls into a pot of kosher food, the undesirable element is "nullified" if the desirable element is sixty times greater than it.

Thus, the Rebbe concludes, in a year blessed with a double, 60-day Adar, all undesirable elements -- every and any cause for pain, sadness, discouragement or dejection -- are nullified and sublimated by the transformative joy of Adar.

Adar I begins on 5 February; Adar II on 7 March.

SERVICE TIMES

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
<small>05/02 & 06/02: 7:00 (Rosh Chodesh) 07/03 & 08/03: 7:00 (Rosh Chodesh)</small>	
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
Friday	5:45
Shabbat	6:30
From 16/01	6:15

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Mendel & Tzippy Chaikin and to Rabbi Yossi & Rivky Chaikin on the birth of a daughter and granddaughter in New York.
- Doris Samson on the birth of a great granddaughter in Manchester.

BIRTHDAYS

- Vivienne Frame on her 80th birthday on the 4th February.
- Melanie Jacobs on her 60th birthday on the 15th February.
- Lily Sarembock on her 91st birthday on the 28th February.

BAR/BAT-MITZVAH

- Mazaltov to Doreen Kapeluschnik on her grandson's barmitzvah.

MARRIAGES

- Ygal Mencer and to Flory Mencer on the marriage of their son and grandson, Eitan, to Silvia Benquis.
- Cecil Kramer on the marriage of his daughter Tashi to Alan Blumenfeld on 17th February.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Justin Abratt
- Barney Gordon
- Marion Gordon



Sinai Encore They're back

The first five of the 14 international speakers have been revealed.



**SINAI
INDABA**

It's that time of year again. The time when we come together as a community to be inspired, uplifted and united. Over the past eight years we have heard thoughts and ideas from some of the most phenomenal minds in the world – and this Sinai Indaba, they're back.

Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi

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Dr David Pelcovitz

JHB

Rabbi David Aaron

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Major General Yaakov Amidror

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