

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

June 2023

Sivan/Tammuz 5783

SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting
🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)
For service times see page 2

16 & 17 June – 28 Sivan

🕒 Shelach
🕒 5:05 – 🕒 5:58

23 & 24 June – 5 Tammuz

🕒 Korach
🕒 5:07 – 🕒 5:59

30 June & 1 July – 12 Tammuz

🕒 Chukat & Balak
🕒 5:09 – 🕒 6:01

7 & 8 July – 19 Tammuz

🕒 Pinchas
🕒 5:12 – 🕒 6:04

RABBI'S MESSAGE

The children from New York started phoning and sending pictures one after the other. The sky was an eerie orange colour and the air was filled with acrid smoke. The source was a series of wildfires in the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Ontario. A thick cloud had spread across the entire Northeast of the USA. Children were sent home from school wearing COVID-era masks and New Yorkers advised to stay indoors and to refrain from strenuous activity.

The calls from Brooklyn were soon followed by those of the children living in Pennsylvania and as far

South as the Washington suburbs in Maryland, similarly complaining of poor air quality and strange hues in the sky. Apparently the cloud of smoke had travelled across the ocean, as far as Norway.

As air traffic was disrupted, I was reminded of the 2010 Eyjafjallajökull eruption in Iceland, which sent plumes of volcanic ash more than half way around the world. Airlines, unsure if this would affect the operation of aircraft, grounded their fleets for days.

Events such as these make us feel that we are not in control and that the entire world is one global village, with our mutual fates so closely intertwined.

Being out of control is an awful feeling. This is the worst part of the electricity and water shortage crisis we are experiencing. Besides the lack of service delivery which is most unnerving and disruptive, the fact that we are subject to forces that are totally out of our power is the most unsettling. Our coping mechanism is to attempt to

regain control—hence the rising sales of inverters and solar panels and the proliferation of Jojo tanks and boreholes. This is fairly effective, but at the end of the day, it is G-d who runs the world.

We were jolted into that reality at 2:41 a.m. on Sunday morning, when a 4.8 magnitude earthquake started to shake our walls, clatter our windows and rattle our nerves. (I believe some people literally slept through it—I cannot imagine there were many.) What to do? Cover our head in the duvet and wish it away? Get up and run outside in pyjamas. Stand in a doorway, apparently the safest place in a home? Was this just an isolated event? Or the precursor to larger tremors to follow?

Thank G-d it turned out that the damage to property was minimal and that nobody was hurt.

As most of us around Gauteng battled to fall back asleep after such a rude awakening, we all had to realise that from Alberta to Alberton, He is in charge.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I did four loads of laundry. Some in the machine and some handwash. I could not waste the opportunity. There was electricity and water... and sunshine. So I followed the well-known advice, "make laundry while the sun shines."

I walked around my house gathering all things that needed to be washed. Hand towels, big towels, tablecloths, sheets and just plain old laundry. I suddenly realized that you can never finish doing laundry. Simply, the clothes that you are wearing will soon need to be washed.

Cooking, and washing dishes and pots is just the same. As long as we eat there will be food to cook and dishes to wash.

This is just not in the physical work, where work can never be complete. If you want to be a mentch or a learned person, you cannot stop growing and you cannot stop learning. We have to keep on at it. Keep up the learning and keep up the self-improvement, to be a better and more refined human being. Like the laundry and housework, you can never be done with this.

Have a happy month.

Rivky

SERVICE TIMES
SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Monday & Thursday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Friday	5:20
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A STORY
**THE MARRIAGE THAT
WAS MEANT TO BE**

by Elchonon Isaacs (chabad.org)

It was a joyous day in the Ukrainian city of Mohyliv, where the Jewish community was inaugurating the new women's mikvah. Times were difficult and the fact that they had scraped together the funds to build a spacious and welcoming mikvah was certainly cause for celebration.

The atmosphere was jubilant at the crowded reception, especially among the women, who treasured the mitzvah of mikvah and looked forward to using the new facility. The rebbetzin and the butcher's wife found themselves sitting together; both women shared a common sorrow, they were childless. A well-wisher came over and wholeheartedly blessed them that they should merit to have children.

The rebbetzin was so moved that she declared to the butcher's wife, "If we merit, with G-d's blessing, to have children, you a girl and I a boy, or vice versa, let's marry them off. What a fine shidduch that will be!"

When the rabbi heard that his unborn offspring

had been promised to the butcher and his wife, he was none too pleased. But time passed, and the entire episode was all but forgotten.

Years passed and the rabbi of Mohyliv was looking for a suitable young man for his daughter. He traveled from one yeshivah to another, searching for a young man who was learned, sensitive, G-d fearing, and from fine, respectable stock. In one yeshivah, he met the son of the rabbi of Kyiv, who impressed him, and the engagement was soon announced.

During the engagement period, the groom was invited for an extended stay in Mohyliv, his wife's hometown. The excited groom was warmly welcomed. As the visit wore on, a sense of unexplained anxiety seemed to overcome him. His change of mood could be traced to a certain house on the way from the bride's home to the synagogue. Whenever he walked by, a woman would stand at the window and stare him down. At times, he even noticed her weeping.

His curiosity got the better of him and one day he approached her and asked her to explain her tears. "It is my personal

story and does not have anything to do with you,” she said with saddened eyes. The groom gently pressed her, and at last, she acquiesced.

As she told the story, the groom became pale and asked to be allowed into the house to sit down. A long while passed, and he struggled to regain his composure. Finally, he went back to the home of his future in-laws. It was from that moment on that the unexplained anxiety was apparent in the young groom.

* * *

The date of the wedding arrived. Excitement filled the air. The rabbi of Mohyliv and the rabbi of Kyiv were escorting the groom to the chuppah. Friends and relatives had gathered from the entire region to celebrate this important occasion with their venerable leaders.

Before the ceremony began, the groom asked to say a few words. The surprised crowd listened in silence.

He began by confiding how he had noticed a woman crying every time he walked past, and then revealed what she had told him on that fateful day. The woman, the butcher's wife, told him what had

happened some two decades prior, on the day of the mikvah inauguration, when she and the rebbetzin had given their word that if blessed with children, they would marry them to one another.

“The rebbetzin had a girl, and I had a boy,” the butcher's wife explained, “but my dreams for my son's future were short-lived. My domestic helper took my baby in a wooden tub to the river together with the laundry. As she was working, a wave swept away the tub with the baby inside. The tragedy was so awful, we never recovered.

“Now, when I see you walking by, I remember my lost child, who, according to the plan, was supposed to marry the rabbi's daughter.”

This part of the story was well known to the townspeople, and they understood the heartache of the butcher's wife. However, what followed is what shocked the crowd.

The groom continued: “I asked the woman if she still had any of the kerchiefs she had used to swaddle her son. When she replied in the affirmative, it was my turn to be shocked.

“I must reveal a family secret: I am not the biological son of the rabbi and rebbetzin of Kyiv. They were childless and adopted me after someone found me on the Dniester river bank, next to one of the Jewish neighborhoods. My adoptive parents only had one sign that would identify me—the cloth I was wrapped in.”

“When the butcher's wife showed me the cloth she had wrapped her baby in, I recognized that I was standing before my biological mother. I am now about to be married, and my birth parents are sitting home and mourning!” the groom concluded.

The emotion that washed over the crowd is nearly impossible to describe. All the guests escorted the groom to his parents' house. The rabbi embraced the butcher, as the rebbetzin hugged the butcher's wife. Twenty years after they had made up to marry their children, they set off to the chuppah, all three sets of parents together. The joy that pervaded Mohyliv that night, was never matched.

The story was recorded by Kalman Bar-David (Burstein), who heard the story from his father Rabbi David Burstein, rav of Rădăuți (Radeviți), Romania.

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Doris Samson on the birth of a great granddaughter born to Leah and Chaim Moszkowski in Leeds UK
- Ivan & Jo-Ann Epstein and Veronica Brenner on the birth of a granddaughter and great granddaughter, born to Michael & Saige Davar in London, UK

MARRIAGES

- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the marriage of their great grandson Harry Jacobson to Lydia Kenley in London

BIRTHDAYS

- Gertie Feinstein on the occasion of her 92nd birthday on the 17th June.
- Andrea Aaron on the occasion of her 84th birthday on the 23rd June.
- Jeanette Markovitz on the occasion of her 92nd birthday on the 26th June.

ENGAGEMENT

- Raymond and Hillary Isakow on the engagement of their son, David, to Omer Kochav In Israel.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:



- Cecilie Marks
- Willie Wittert

BEREAVEMENTS

We wish long life to:

- The family of Merrick Brenner on his death.

May Hashem comfort them and their families among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem and grant them long life.



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to mark a happy event in your family
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