

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

March 2014

Adar II 5774

SHABBAT TIMES

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

14 & 15 March – 13 Adar II

🕒 Tzav (Zachor)

🕒 6:07 – 🕒 6:55

21 & 22 March – 20 Adar II

🕒 Shemini (Parah)

🕒 6:00 – 🕒 6:48

28 & 29 March – 27 Adar II

🕒 Tazria (Hachodesh)

🕒 5:53 – 🕒 6:40

4 & 5 April – 5 Nissan

🕒 Metzora

🕒 5:45 – 🕒 6:33

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I would like to start this newsletter by welcoming Debbie Katzman and Neil Daitz who have joined your committee. We are very excited and grateful to have their fresh ideas and energy.

We are starting the year off with a bang at our Purim function. This year we'll be having a braai on Sunday the 16th in a combined function with West Street Shul. There will be entertainment for adults as well as kids and it will be a festive function, so please join us together with your kids, grandkids friends etc.

We will be hosting a dinner on the Friday night before Pesach (11th April) in honour of the women (and some men) who will be slogging

away getting ready for Pesach. We will send out details soon.

Also, we are considering a communal seder. It takes a lot of effort and we would appreciate your feedback as to whether you (and your families) would attend a communal seder on the second night of Pesach. We need this info relatively urgently so please reply as soon as possible whether you attend or not.

Further updates of Shul matters are that the water meter saga is ongoing but we are making progress with the Department of Water affairs. The Saxonwold property's subdivision has been approved and the application to have the Shul campus subdivided is ongoing.

Please note, and tell your 50 closest friends, that the Simon Kuper Hall is now available for functions once again. The Shul will be running the venue and we will allow any kosher caterer to cater there. The pricing is competitive as well so please avail yourself of this opportunity.

I hope you have a great month ahead and look forward to seeing you at the Purim Braai

Regards

Brian

RABBI'S MESSAGE

I wrote the following in March 2008. For reasons which will immediately become evident, I reproduce it below:

"The Jews had light, happiness, gladness and glory" (Esther 8,16)

This verse is not describing South Africa, sometime (hopefully in the not too distant future) when load shedding has finally been eradicated. It refers to the Jews of Shushan and the rest of the Persian Empire, when news began to spread that Haman had been eliminated and his decree against the Jews was in the process of being overturned.

We have never been able to appreciate light the way we have, here in South Africa, in the past couple of months. We always took it for granted: you walk into a room; it is dark; flick the switch; the room is filled with a beautiful glow

These days, we have learnt, it is not a given. We will be sitting with our family eating dinner. Without warning, suddenly we are plunged in darkness. We begin to scramble for alternative sources of illumination. The cheap, imported, plug-in Chinese emergency lamps have long stopped working, ill-designed to cope with frequent and repeated charges and

discharges. Cadac lamps and candles are lit, as we make new plans for the evening. The kettle had not been put on to boil yet, so no tea tonight. The urgent report that had to be ready for the next morning will simply not be; the batteries in the laptop will not last long enough. No checking email or watching television either. The rest of the evening is spent in a state of gloom and mild depression.

After a couple of hours, just as unexpectedly, the power is back on again. "Oh!" everybody cries out. Light fills the home; with it comes happiness and joy.

The Talmud (Megilah 16b) comments on the verse "the Jews had light" by saying "Light refers to Torah."

There is a sub-plot to the story of Purim. Visibly it is an anti-Semitic Haman who decrees extermination against the Jews to serve a personal agenda and King Achashverosh who sleeps away in a drunken stupor, allowing his viceroy to run the country without interference. At the same time, we have a Jewish people who are in a spiritual darkness, who have forgotten about the light of the Torah and its teachings. When Haman says to Achashverosh, about the Jews, "there is ('אֵין) one nation" the Talmud explains that he was also alluding to the fact that they were asleep ('אֵין) in their observance of Mitzvot.

Hence while the king below was sleeping, the King of Kings above was also in a slumber, allowing Haman's plot to take its natural course.

The turning point, says the Talmud, was when Mordechai and Esther seized the moment and galvanized

the entire Jewish community of Shushan to repentance. After three days of fasting and pleading, sleep eluded the king. It was not only Achashverosh who was suffering from insomnia; the King above also woke up in response to the prayers and the pleas of the desperate Jews.

Once again, the light of Torah illuminated their lives. In fact their return to Torah and their acceptance of Mitzvot was in certain respects greater than the commitment they had made at Sinai. Basking in the glow of Torah, the Jews were once again worthy of salvation. The demise of Haman and of his followers was now inevitable.

For centuries, we have lived by the light of Torah. From time to time, we suffer from a form of self-imposed load-shedding, as we throw off the 'yoke of the Torah and the Mitzvot' and find ourselves in spiritual darkness. We then begin to grope in the dark for alternative sources of energy, candles and matches, but nothing can equal the beauty and the glorious glow of the real thing.

Eventually, we come to see the light and allow the Torah to illuminate our lives once again. "Oh!" we say, as we are filled with gladness and joy.

Each Saturday night, when we make Havdalah after Shabbat to begin a new week, we also say a Bracha over light. At that time, we quote this famous verse from the Megilat Esther, "The Jews had light, happiness, gladness and glory" and we add the words "so may it be for us..." Amen.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

As a proud Jo'burger one of the things I love about living here is our beautiful weather. As we listen to our children melting in Melbourne, or absolutely freezing in America, we revel in our even tempered, blessed weather in both winter and summer. So these last two miserable weeks have really set us back.

This rain, together with the load shedding (and subsequent power failures), has not been a good advert for Jo'burg – which we have been trying to show off to our newest daughter-in-law, Tzippy.

Mendel and his wife are here for a few days and neither the rain nor dark can spoil the joy of having them here. Happy meals, late night talking and filled up beds... and then they go again... At least we know it isn't far off to Pesach when T.G. some others will come home to fill the beds.

This has become the rhythm of our lives, counting in anticipation, counting the time they are here and then counting again until the next visit. Time doesn't stand still and we have learnt to savour each precious minute and thank Hashem for the joy in the time that we have together.

Happy Purim month

Rivky

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
<small>13/03 (Fast of Esther): 7:00</small>	
<small>01/04 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00</small>	

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
from 13/03	6:00
from 30/03	5:45
Friday	5:45
Shabbat	6:00
from 22/03	5:45
from 05/04	5:30

DVAR TORAH

Analyzing Purim's Main Characters

There's an Esther, Haman and Mordechai in all of us.

*By Orit Esther Riter
(aish.com)*

By delving into the main characters of the Purim story, we can discover some hidden attributes that are still embedded into our psyche, projecting positive and negative influence on our actions.

Haman, the evil antagonist of the Purim story, was steeped in wealth and power. He experienced material bliss to the highest degree and used his money to buy his way up to the highest ranks in the palace of King Achashverosh. He was second in command and in charge of the royal servants. Nonetheless he was still not satisfied with life as the Book of Esther writes, "Yet all this means nothing to me as long as I see that Jew Mordechai sitting at the King's gate and refusing to bow down to me." It means nothing... This is the voice of the ingrate, discontent with life and drowning in a pool of self-entitlement with lack of appreciation for life's gifts.

The Haman in us comes out when we are dissatisfied with what life serves us, wanting more and continuously chasing after our cravings to no end. We sense the undertone of Haman's displeasure in life at the beginning of the Torah when God asks Adam after he has eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, "HaMin ha'etz hazeh (from this tree (you ate))?" Hinted in this question God essentially is asking Adam if Haman was behind

his defiant behavior; and he was.

Adam had at his disposal every tree in the garden, yet he still ate from the one tree that was forbidden to him. Why? The voice of Haman caused Adam to desire and focus on that which he didn't have, not on all that he did have. The voice of Haman whispers to us 'that is not enough, there is so much more out there.' How to rid ourselves of our Haman? Invite him for dinner and then hang him! Meaning, get to know your Haman, recognize his tactics, prepare for the battle and then defeat him on his own turf.

Esther did exactly that. She submerged herself in contemplative prayer and enjoined the nation to invoke Divine mercy. Esther is derived from the root word *hester* (concealment). We each have hidden within us the ability to go against the temptations that are presented before us and fight against them. However, when that side of us gets sleepy, a Haman may come along and shake us up. The goal is to wake up the hidden strength and reveal to ourselves that we can refuse to bow down to Haman's idols. There is an Esther deep down that can combat the Haman when she truly chooses to do so.

In the merit of Esther's self-sacrifice on behalf of her nation she was worthy of being invited to the King's chambers without prior invitation. Achashverosh took one look at Esther and was mesmerized by her amazing spiritual aura. She was glowing from the immense love and concern she had for the Jewish people. This is the power of unconditional

altruistic love; it has the power to spiritually dress us in royal garb and become beloved by all.

Mordechai is the inspiring personality behind Esther. Mordechai embodied the image of a simple humble Jew who wished only to follow God's mandates. He was optimistic and believed that although the picture appeared gloomy, everything could change. He never gave up hope.

In the Book of Esther it is written that Mordechai wailed as he walked up and down the streets of Shushan. His scream emanated from a place of goodness, that Godly spark of benevolent care of another. A cry out for another person's pain and suffering originates from deep within, from a place of wanting to impart goodness to the world. When we tap into this part we become Godly and impart Divine light onto ourselves and those around us. This lies at the heart of a genuinely virtuous leader; the desire to share goodness and see that their needs are met.

Purim brings with it the profound opportunity to take off our masks and reveal our true selves to ourselves. We have within us the great power to overturn what may appear as a hopeless ending to a miraculous outcome. We inherited the ability to fight our way back by such leaders as Mordechai and Esther.

Haman is a distraction intended to gain our attention and awaken our courage to stand up against him. Let's get to know our personal Mordechai and Esther and follow their lead. By doing so, the Hamans will fall by the wayside and be hung on their own gallows

MAZAL TOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Gary & Tamsyn Rutstein on the birth of a daughter
- Theo Rutstein on the birth of a granddaughter
- Andrew & Alicia Thomas-Woolf on the birth of a son
- Ronald & Susan Woolf on the birth of a grandson
- Blima Nudelman on the birth of a great granddaughter in the USA and a great grandson in Israel

BAR/BATMITZVAH

- Russel Wolpe on the barmitzvah of his grandson

BIRTHDAYS

- Dinah Levinson on her 85th birthday on 10th March
- Hylton Abrams on his 83rd birthday on 21st March
- John Brick on his 80th birthday on 25th March
- Rene Gamsu on her 55th birthday on 28th March

ANNIVERSARIES

- Clive and Carole Strimling on their 35th anniversary on 4th March

REFUAH SHLEMAH

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:



- Dawn Nates
- Meyer Chafkin
- Willie Wittert
- Phillip Shifren

- Milton Coplan
- Edith Leiman
- Mackie Brodie
- Maish Sandler

BEREAVEMENTS

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- Lucille Kaplan on the death of her mother, Gladys Powell
- Frank Gonsenhaus on the death of his brother in the USA
- Donald Krausz on the death of wife, Phyllis

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

**FAST OF ESTHER**

THURSDAY 13 MARCH

Fast begins: 4:59 a.m. -- Fast ends: 6:45 p.m. --- Shacharit: 7:00 a.m. -- Mincha: 6:00 p.m.

**PURIM**

SATURDAY 15 MARCH

Shabbat ends: 6:55 p.m.; Megilah reading: 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY 16 MARCH

Shacharit: 8:00 a.m.; First Megilah Reading: 8:45 a.m.; Second Megilah Reading: 12:00 p.m.
followed by our joint

PURIM BRAAI

along with West Street Shul, in the Oxford Shul Garden

Entertainment by Michael Abrahamson

MENTALIST & ILLUSIONIST

Jumping Castle and Entertainment for children

Booking required 0116466020 or info@oxfordshul.com – R130 (R65 12 & under)