

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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March 2016

Adar II 5776

SHABBAT TIMES

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

18 & 19 March – 9 Adar II

🕒 Vayikra (*Zachor*)

🕒 6:02 – 🕒 6:50

25 & 26 March – 16 Adar II

🕒 Tzav

🕒 5:55 – 🕒 6:43

1 & 2 April – 23 Adar II

🕒 Shemini (*Parah*)

🕒 5:47 – 🕒 6:35

8 & 9 April – 1 Nisan

🕒 Tazria (*Hachodesh*)

🕒 5:40 – 🕒 6:28

15 & 16 April – 8 Nisan

🕒 Metzora

🕒 5:33 – 🕒 6:22

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Haman's plan for a Final Solution to the Jewish problem was at best preposterous. What made him think he stood any chance of carrying it out successfully? With the Jewish people so well integrated into Persian society, to the extent that they had been guests at the celebrations marking Achashverosh's third year of rule, a Jewish queen and Mordechai a high ranking royal advisor, why did he expect to realise his evil scheme?

Haman knew that despite all appearances, the Jews of

this time were more vulnerable than ever. In fact he discloses this fact to Achashverosh when he first approaches him to motivate and get royal approval for his wicked plan. "There is one people, scattered and dispersed..." said Haman to the king, "if it pleases the king, let it be written to destroy them." In that phrase, he hit the nail on the head of the weakness of the Jewish people. They lacked unity among themselves, they were "scattered and dispersed" rather than united and bound together.

As long as Am Yisrael held together, Haman knew he was powerless, even in his position of grand vizier of the Persian Empire. But if the Jews were fractious and unable to stand together then perhaps he stood a chance.

"Go gather all the people," was Esther's immediate response to Mordechai upon hearing the news of Haman's pronouncement, "bring them together, unite them." Indeed, the reaction of the Jews was to come together under this threat, to accept the leadership and guidance of Mordechai, and to pray together for salvation. As we know, their joint efforts were

successful, and with a lot of help from Above, they were able to avert the decree. What could have been days of mourning instead turned to days of merriment and celebration.

With the current rise of anti-Semitism throughout the world, we ought to take a leaf out of the Book of Esther to guide us towards an appropriate reaction. The Jewish people is made of so many different groups, each with its own customs, leaders, approaches, culture and folklore. This is of course a measure of our greatness but this can, tragically, also lead to our loss. Now is the time to stand together, overlooking our differences and stressing what we all have in common. This is the time to "gather all the people" and to face the common threat.

Purim this year is on Wednesday night 23rd March and Thursday 24th March. Please see back page for the details of Purim at Oxford Join us as we celebrate, together as a congregation, on Thursday evening with a community Purim Seudah (festive meal)

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

It is harder to get out of bed these days. 5.30 am used to be morning, but these days it is the middle of the night. The weather has started cooling down, particularly at night. Shabbos is getting shorter. We are fast leaving another summer behind and moving towards winter.

I am always so fascinated by the way the planet works, and the fact that while we are dealing with one kind of weather, the people in the Northern Hemisphere have the opposite season. So while we are just settling into our routines of school and work, overseas they are already thinking of and counting down to their summer holidays.

It is especially fascinating as the weather affects our moods, plans and life. I have noticed that people are friendlier when the sun is shining and grumpier when it is cold or overcast. People tend to stay home when it rains. We eat less when the sun shines and comfort ourselves with soup and stews when it's cold. Of course we need to dress differently too.

How does the weather affect our Yiddishkeit? The rain, typically on a late Friday afternoon, keeps us away from shul. The cold keeps us from going out to shiurim or to learn. But we can enjoy chicken soup and cholent. And, of course we know that, with the end of summer, comes Pesach... the holiday

you either dread because of all the hard work or love if family is able to visit and celebrate together. We are so looking forward to welcoming some of our children this year.

Here in Johannesburg we are blessed with our weather. Despite this year's hot summer, we are most lucky to live in a moderate climate without too many extremes. Just another thing to put on our list of thanks to Hashem.

Have a good month.

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

*(by Yanky Tauber
www.chabad.org)*

A THROW OF DICE

Numerous factors contributed to the salvation of the Jewish people from Haman's decree, not least amongst them Mordechai's rousing of the Jews to repentance and Esther's efforts on their behalf. Yet the name of the festival—the one word chosen to express its essence—refers to a seemingly minor detail: the fact that Haman selected the date of his proposed annihilation of the Jews by casting lots (pur is Persian for “lot”). Obviously, the significance of Haman's lots lies at the very heart of what Purim is all about.

Why did Haman cast lots? Because he was attempting to break what, to his mind, was a “vicious cycle” that had been plaguing him and his ilk since the appearance of the Jewish nation a thousand years earlier. Many great and

powerful men, from Pharaoh to Nebuchadnezzar—not to mention Haman's own ancestors, the Amalekites—had tried to destroy this people. Granted, the Jews have a great and powerful G-d, but they also have this inane habit of angering Him with their transgressions. All one needs to do, it would seem, is wait for such an opportune moment. But always, at the very last minute, the Jews repent, and time and again their G-d is reconciled with them and saves them.

Haman knew that the Jews had sinned yet again by worshipping Nebuchadnezzar's idol and partaking of Achashverosh's feast; but who knows how long their estrangement from G-d will last this time?

As long as our plans hinge upon the virtue or iniquity of Israel, reasoned Haman, we'll just have a repeat of the same old scenario. A more basic approach is called for. Can it be that G-d really cares about one people more than another? Can it be that He is truly pleased by “good” deeds and angered by “bad”

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
<i>10/03 & 11/03 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00</i>	
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
Friday	5:45
Shabbat	6:15

ones? Surely G-d is beyond all that. There might be a level of reality on which goodness is rewarded and evil is punished, but on a higher plane, these things are obviously meaningless. On that level, a truly infinite G-d has no concern with what goes on in the material world, and the prime minister of the mightiest empire on earth can do what he chooses to a small, dispersed minority.

So Haman cast lots, hoping to “connect” to that level of reality that transcends the laws of good and evil—to that level of reality on which, he believed, everything is up for grabs, as free of any moral rules as a throw of dice.

What Haman failed to realize was that the people of Israel are G-d’s chosen people—that even on the level of divine “choice,” which transcends all logical criteria, G-d desires them and protects them. It is true that G-d, in essence, is beyond it all; but this very G-d chose—for no other reason than that such was His desire—to take the people of Israel as His own.

The Jew always knows this in the deepest part of his soul, even if his external behavior may, at times, run away from this realization. This, ultimately, is the reason why we always return to G-d, and why G-d always forgives us in the end.

This, ultimately, is the very essence of the miracle of Purim, and the very essence of the miracle called “the people of Israel.”

UNKNOWN JOY

"A person is obligated to drink on Purim," says the Talmud, "until he does not know the difference between 'Cursed be Haman' and 'Blessed be Mordechai'"

There are different types of joy. There is "the joy of mitzvah," for a Jew is commanded to "Serve G-d with Joy" (Psalms 100:2). A mitzvah performed joyously is greater, deeper, more alive, than a mitzvah performed mechanically. This joy, however, is not an end in itself, but for the sake of enhancing a mitzvah.

Another type of Jewish joy is the mitzvah to "Rejoice in your festivals" (Deuteronomy 16:15). Here, joy is not an accessory to another aim. The mitzvah itself is to rejoice.

But the fact that one needs to be commanded to rejoice indicates that this is still not the ultimate in joy. A greater joy is one King Solomon speaks of when he says, "The good-hearted is festive always." (Proverbs 15:15), describing joy as a state of being rather than an activity. This is the joy experienced in the month of Adar—in the words of the Talmud, "When Adar commences, joy increases." One who is attuned to the spiritual essence of Jewish time spontaneously rejoices when entering the month of joy.

Still, this is a conscious joy, and the very fact that a person is aware that he is rejoicing indicates that his joy is an assumed state rather than an intrinsic condition. The acme of joy is attained on Purim, when the Jew celebrates "until he does not know." So thoroughly does the joy of Purim permeate the soul of the Jew, that he doesn't even know that he's rejoicing!

Purim by Numbers

- 1** times that G-d's name is mentioned in the Book of Esther
- 2** parties Esther asks Achashverosh to throw for her and Haman
- 3** days of fasting by the Jews prior to Esther going to see King Achashverosh
- 4** mitzvot to fulfill on Purim – reading the Book of Esther, Matanot L'evyonim (money to the poor), Mishloach Manot (gifts of food) and feasting
- 9** years in which the Purim story unfolds
- 13** date in Nissan that Haman cast the lots
- 13** date in Adar that the decree to kill the Jews fell out
- 54** times that Haman's name appears in the Book of Esther
- 54** letters spelling out the names of Haman's ten sons
- 54** words in the "Al HaNisim" prayer recited on Purim
- 127** provinces that Achashverosh ruled
- 127** years that our matriarch Sarah lived
- 180** days that Achashverosh's party in Shushan lasted
- 240** numerical value of the Hebrew words "Amalek" and "doubt" (safek)
- 502** numerical value for both phrases: "Cursed be Haman" and "Blessed be Mordechai"
- 2368** years ago that the Purim story took place

Happy Purim from **aish.com**

For more Purim insights, visit Aish.com/purim

MAZALTOV**BIRTHS**

- Mazeltov to Anthony & Danielle Gilbert and Clive & Rhona Gilbert on the birth of a daughter and grand-daughter.
- Mazeltov to Maisie Ehrlich on the birth of a great grand-son in Cape Town.
- Mazal Tov to Blima Nudelman on the birth of a great grandson in Israel.

MARRIAGES

- Mazeltov to Philip and Aileen Shifrin on the wedding of their son Lucian to Claire Silverman on 18 February.

BIRTHDAYS

- Leora Berger on her 70th birthday on 6 March.
- Mrs Esther Manne on her 91st birthday on 9 March.
- Alan Bolon on his 65th birthday on 10 March.
- Inna Orlanski on her 60th birthday on 11 March.
- Dan Melnik on his 35th birthday on 11 March.
- Michael Rothschild on his 90th birthday on 20 March.
- Franky Auerbach on her 70th birthday on 29th March.
- Sarah Copelowitz on her 101st birthday on 29 March.
- Cecilie Marks on her 70th birthday on 30 March.

ANNIVERSARIES

- David and Roslyn Sussman on their 45th anniversary on 4 March.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a
Speedy Recovery
to

- Frank Wilks
- Mirah Wilks
- Harold Morgrabi
- Bernard Binkin

**BEREAVEMENTS**

Our condolences to
the following who
have suffered
bereavements
recently:



- Rene Gamsu and Jack and Alan Selesnik on the death of their mother, Rose Selesnik.
- Gerald Kaplan on the death of his mother, Sonia Miller.
- Alan Goldstein and Rene Ichilchik on the death of their mother Eva Milner.

**FAST OF ESTHER****WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH**

Fast begins: 5:05 a.m. -- Fast ends: 6:33 p.m. --- Shacharit: 7:00 a.m. -- Mincha: 6:00 p.m.

Megilah reading: 6:30 p.m.**PURIM****THURSDAY 24 MARCH**Shacharit: 6:45 a.m.; **Megilah Reading: 7:30 a.m.** (approximately).**Second Megilah Reading 5:15 p.m***followed by***PURIM SEUDAH****Entertainment for all ages***Booking required 011-646-6020 or info@oxfordshul.com – R100 (R80 12 & under)*

בס"ד



COME **LAUGH** WITH US AT
OXFORD SHUL
AS WE CELEBRATE PURIM

THURSDAY 24 MARCH 2016
MEGILAH READING 5:15 P.M.
FOLLOWED BY SUPPER

**ENTERTAINMENT BY
JITTERY CITIZENS**



**COST: R100 PER PERSON
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