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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

March 2019

Adar II 5779

SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting

🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)

For service times see page 3

8 & 9 March – 2 Adar II

🕒 Pekudei

🕒 6:14 – 🕒 7:02

15 & 16 March – 9 Adar II

🕒 Vayikra (Zachor)

🕒 6:06 – 🕒 6:55

22 & 23 March – 16 Adar II

🕒 Tzav

🕒 5:59 – 🕒 6:47

29 & 30 March – 23 Adar II

🕒 Shemini (Parah)

🕒 5:51 – 🕒 6:40

5 & 6 April – 1 Nissan

🕒 Tazria (Hachodesh)

🕒 5:44 – 🕒 6:32

RABBI'S MESSAGE

It was a perfect moment. This time of year it is still quite dark early in the morning yet the nights are still balmy and pleasant. Hence I stepped out into the garden to draw strength and energy for the day ahead. In the sky shone a beautiful waning crescent Moon, surrounded by a host of bright stars and a magnificent Venus.

The stillness of the pre-dawn night was broken by a symphony of birds tweeting, chirping, shrieking, crying and singing. And then...

across the African plain, the sound of a lion roaring.

(Yes, I know, the lion enclosure at the Johannesburg Zoo is 700 metres away as the crow flies, but please don't spoil a good story.)

I stood there taking in the absolute feast to the senses, visual, auditory, olfactory and thought to myself, what a perfect way to start a day!

Could I grab the moment and put in a bottle for keeps?

Later than day my colleagues and I were invited to have lunch with a number of dignitaries in town for the Sinai Indaba and privileged to have a number of them address us.

Dr David Pelocvitz shared a profound thought, which resonated with my early morning musings.

He spoke of the ram in the story of the Akedah, the Binding of Isaac. The ram which Abraham noticed was caught in the bushes by its horns, ready to serve as the offering which he would now place on the altar in lieu of his beloved son.

One can look at that ram as stuck, unable to move and helplessly destined to be slaughtered as a substitute. Or one can look at that same ram as perfectly positioned, ready to act in the service of Hashem and to be elevated to the greatest heights any animal species can ever reach.

So many times in our lives we may feel we are jammed, trapped in an unenviable and unfortunate situation, facing a Hobson's choice which can only lead in one direction. Do we consider that perhaps, rather than stuck, we are actually perfectly placed to face a bespoke challenge which has been custom made for us at this particular juncture in our life?

Are we victims of destiny of masters of our future? This is the question we need to ask at every single point in time.

There was not need to bottle that morning's perfection. For every moment is the perfect moment.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

My cousin lives in Observatory, in the home my Bobba and Zaida lived in many years ago. It is also two blocks away from my childhood home. Last week for the first time in many years, I visited.

This nostalgic journey began as we drove down Innes Street, crossed Observatory Avenue and then into Urania Street. My best friend's home on the right, my swimming teacher on the left, also my music teacher. How many times had I walked the street? I wondered.

I used to catch the school bus on that corner, 6:30 a.m.! My nanny chasing me with a bowl of porridge (Ugh!) and a mug of coffee for the driver.

I sat in the garden. I remembered the tennis court, the steep staircase where Oscar the dog lay across the top protecting the grandchildren from falling down the stairs.

I don't have too many memories from there... Just vivid recollections of chocolates and ginger cake. Sitting there just made me think and marvel at the lives of all those who lived there.

They lived, they worked, they played, they planned and they loved!

I was taken by the way a physical place, bricks and stones, streets and pavements, trees and grass can evoke such strong feelings, memories and emotions.

Then when I came home, I looked around and wondered, "what will do this for my children?"

Wishing you a good month

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

THE TRAP OF WANTING IT ALL

*by Rabbi Shraga Simmons
(aish.com)*

Status-seeking underlies Haman's intense hatred of the Jews.

Haman, the villain of the Purim story, lived a thousand years after the Torah was written. Yet with timeless vision, the Talmud (Chulin 139b) asks: Where is Haman's name hinted in the Torah?

The Sages cite Genesis 3:11, where G-d confronts Adam in the Garden: "Did you eat from this (hamin) forbidden tree?"

This is more than just clever wordplay. The deeper connection between Adam and Haman, explains Rabbi Shmuel Eidels (16th century Maharsha) is that both Adam and Haman lacked only one thing – and it drove them over the edge.

What was Adam's "one thing"?

Adam was given free reign in the Garden of Eden; the entire world was created for him alone. G-d designated only the Tree of Knowledge off limits – His way of drawing a line, of making clear to humanity: You are not G-d. There is only one G-d.

Adam obsessed about that "one thing." So when the Snake suggested that eating from the Tree would transform "human" into "deity," Adam challenged G-d and ate from the tree.

Fast forward to Haman, Prime Minister of a 127-country global empire, who fancied himself as a supreme being. Everyone bowed to Haman.

Except for one. Mordechai the Jew.

Haman had everything – power, privilege, and prestige. Yet upon seeing Mordechai

refusing to kowtow, Haman became enraged. "None of this power means anything to me, as long as I see Mordechai the Jew sitting at the king's gate" (Esther 5:13).

Haman's ego was in need of constant validation and he could not bear such rejection. Tormented, he vowed to destroy the Jewish people – every man, woman and child.

What is the root of Haman's vicious reaction?

Ultimately, the single factor impeding every megalomaniac's quest for global domination is G-d. Mordechai, as leader of the Jewish people – representatives of monotheism – embodied the "one thing" that drove Haman crazy.

To silence this truth, Haman obsessively targeted Mordechai and the Jews. He built a gallows 80 feet high that could be seen throughout all of Shushan. More than simply hanging Mordechai, this was to be the ultimate statement of victory over the Jewish ideal. Then, everyone would acknowledge Haman's unparalleled superiority. His narcissistic ego could accept nothing less.

The Trap of Status-Seeking

Psychologists tell us that every person has a "realistic level" of importance and status – at home, at work, and in the community. Artificially raising that level with delusions of grandeur is unsustainable. Inevitably, reality hits, we fail to live up to that skewed level of importance and our self-esteem plummets.

As with Adam, the first step in emotional health is to know that every human is finite; only G-d is eternal. The closer relationship one has with G-d, the more realistic we become about our own fallibility and mortality. Moses was called the "most humble" because when

he stood before G-d he knew his place. The Talmud likens arrogance to idol worship; both push away the presence of G-d.

When a person knows his place and is realistic about his role in the greater scheme of things, his self-esteem is realistic, balanced and healthy.

One who places "self above G-d" is doomed to failure. It's no wonder that Haman the megalomaniac was hanged on the very gallows he'd prepared for Mordechai the Jew.

Status: The Currency of Today

The spirit of Amalek is hauntingly relevant for us today. The primary currency of Western society is status, and by our association with various people and things, our status is always rising or falling.

The pursuit of status raises an existential question: Is it better to look good or to be good? We confront this question every time we use social media. Are we sharing a genuine depiction of the reality of our lives, or do we post only those items that gain us status – i.e., an inflated version of "looking good" that we falsely project ourselves to be?

It's a vicious cycle. In order to constantly prop up an inflated ego, we seek adulation in the form of "likes," retweets, and endless stream of validation.

The Talmud (Avot 4:21) asserts that "status-seeking removes a person from the world." When self-esteem depends on adulation from others, linked to external circumstances beyond our control, it is a losing proposition.

Rebbetzin S. Feldbrand explains: When we worry about being accepted by others, we judge ourselves by the opinions of those whose moods, attitudes, and values are constantly changing. We

place our happiness in the hands of people who themselves worry about how others judge them.

We constantly invest great amounts of energy into pleasing first one person, then another. We try to be one person in the morning, another during the day, and yet another at night. Sometimes, under pressure from others, we act in opposition to our true inner nature – leaving us empty and degraded.

Inevitably, we can never win this game. Someone will always have more status than us. While physical desires have a saturation point, the desire for honor is based on falsehood and illusion. No amount will ever be fully satisfying. When an honor-seeker lacks the approval just one person, he feels bereft.

So despite all the status and power, as long as Mordechai the Jew refused to bow, Haman was unsatisfied. That is why Haman's wife Zeresh tells him (Esther 6:13): "If that's your attitude, you are destined to fail." You will never have everything, because when it comes to honor, appetite is insatiable.

The Jewish Mission Today

When the battle was finally over, the Jewish nation emerged victorious. It was a time of true Jewish unity, a dramatic reversal of the description Haman used to denounce the Jews as "a nation scattered and split" (Esther 3:8). Jewish division and strife is what fueled Haman's confidence; thus prior to her risky unannounced visit to the king, Esther told Mordechai to "assemble all the Jews" (Esther 4:16) – i.e. we will succeed in counteracting Haman only if the Jews come together in unity.

This idea of a shared destiny was formalized in the

Purim traditions (Esther 9:22). We send Mishloach Manot, gifts of food one to another, to engrain in us the message: To prevail, we must unite together.

The primary path to Jewish unity is Torah study, which facilitates the sharing of our unique inspirational message with the world.

Indeed, in wake of the Jewish victory over Haman, the Megillah reports that "the Jews had light" (Esther 8:16). This, the Talmud (Megilla 16b) explains, is the light of Torah, the guidepost for every generation of Jews.

Having witnessed the degradation of Haman – a genocidal madman bent on world domination – the Jews in Persia accepted the Torah anew. They understood with renewed clarity that Torah stands as a bulwark against the corrupt drive for "status at all costs."

Haman's plan was thwarted because Mordechai the Jew would not budge from his stiff-necked loyalty to the monotheistic message. In the process, he saved humanity from barbarism. As it was true and relevant back then, we Jews believe, so it is today..

SERVICE TIMES

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
<i>07/03 & 08/03: 7:00 (Rosh Chodesh)</i>	
<i>20/03: 7:00 (Fast of Esther)</i>	
<i>21/03: 8:00 (Purim)</i>	
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
<i>from 18/03</i>	6:00
<i>from 31/03</i>	5:45
Friday	5:45
Shabbat	6:00
<i>From 23/03</i>	5:45

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHDAYS

- Glenda Myers on her 70th birthday on the 7th March.
- Esther Manne on her 94th birthday on the 9th March.
- Michael Rothschild on his 93rd birthday on the 20th March.

- John Brick on his 85th birthday on the 25th March.
- Rene Gamsu on her 60th birthday on the 28th March.

ANNIVERSARIES

- Clive & Carole Strimling on their 40th anniversary on the 4th March.

BAR/BAT-MITZVAH

- Esme Utian on the Batmitzvah of her granddaughter.

- Robert & Hayley Gecelter and Louis & Sybil Gecelter on the Batmitzvah of their daughter and granddaughter, Raquel, on 14th March.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Inna Orlianski
- Nita Kotzen
- Glenda Myers

**FAST OF ESTHER****WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH**

Fast begins: 5:03 a.m. -- Fast ends: 6:37 p.m. --- Shacharit: 7:00 a.m. -- Mincha: 6:00 p.m.
Megilah reading: 7:00 p.m.

**PURIM****THURSDAY 21 MARCH**

Shacharit: 8:00 a.m.; Megilah Reading: 8:45 a.m. (approximately)

Second Megilah Reading 10:30 a.m.

followed by

PURIM BRUNCH

Entertainment by Ryan Sharp, Illusionist

Booking required 011-646-6020 or info@oxfordshul.com – R120 per person