

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER March 2020

Adar 5780

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+ SHABBAT TIMES

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

6 & 7 March – 11 Adar

🕒 Tetzaveh (*Zachor*)

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:03

13 & 14 March – 18 Adar

🕒 Ki Tisa (*Parah*)

🕒 6:07 – 🕒 6:56

20 & 21 March – 25 Adar

🕒 Vayakhel & Pekudei (*Hachodesh*)

🕒 6:00 – 🕒 6:48

27 & 28 March – 3 Nisan

🕒 Vayikra

🕒 5:53 – 🕒 6:41

3 & 4 April – 10 Nisan

🕒 Tzav (*Shabbat Hagadol*)

🕒 5:45 – 🕒 6:34

RABBI'S MESSAGE

The Sandton Gautrain station on a Sunday night is fairly eerie. There are few commuters, and signs all around, remind patrons to safeguard their valuables.

I thus got into the lift, for the long journey from Basement -8 to ground level, with some apprehension. I was greatly relieved when I was followed in by a Gautrain security guard, and then, just as the doors were closing, by another two such officers.

As the car began its upward trip, I looked up and shared my thoughts with my co-riders, "I feel so safe, with the three of you here with me." One of the guards looked at me, smiled and replied, "We feel so safe here, with the

man of G-d riding up with us." Immediately, one of his colleagues intoned, "Amen", to which the four of us, in unison, responded, "Amen."

The dialogue in the elevator reminded me of a conversation between Mordechai and Esther, recorded in the Megilah, when word of Haman's decree of total annihilation of the Jewish Nation became public.

In Mordechai's mind, all now fits into place. All those years before, Esther brutally abducted and taken to King Achashverosh's harem, desperately clinging to Jewish practice while keeping her affiliation secret, ultimately crowned queen. None of this had made any sense. Now it seems obvious: the keys to the salvation of her people are in her hands; she is the right person in the right place at the right time.

Mordechai immediately begins to plead with Esther to use her influence and charm with the King to achieve a reprieve from the devastating decree. Esther appreciates that the only intervention that will be able to bring about the miraculous rescue needed is that of the King in Heaven. She therefore replies that she will go to plead with King Achashverosh, but only if, concurrently, the entire Jewish Nation engage in fasting, praying and pleading of their own.

This explains Esther's strange decision to invite both Achashverosh and Haman to feast with her, not once, but two days in a row. It would appear to be the most inappropriate step to take, cozying up to the arch-enemy while her co-religionists are gathering in their houses of worship, crying out to Hashem to deliver them from the hands of those very two people.

But this was precisely what she wanted her brothers and sisters to think as they assembled in prayer. The fact that there was a Jewish Queen in the palace was now an open secret in the Jewish community. And she feared they were relying too much on her intercession and not enough on Divine salvation. If word got out that she could not be relied on, the Jews were likely to pray harder and depend less on her shrewd political lobbying.

The story of the miracle of Purim is described in the Megilah with the following words, "For the Jews there was light and joy..."

As for me, I walked out of the train station, humbled and also feeling I had somehow been shown the light. To add to my own little personal miracle, the scheduled load shedding for Sandton had somehow been averted so, for this Jew, there was also physical light..

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I have often wondered how I would spend an extra day. You know how we say that we need more hours in a day.

Some years ago we flew from the USA to Australia. We got an extra day but wasted it sitting on an airplane.

This year we got another extra day, 29th of February. Once again I wondered how I would make use of it. Once again I let it go by without doing anything significantly different.

Really, I could use an extra day.

Every year I intend to be so organised so that Purim and Pesach will not creep up on me. Yet, despite my very best intentions, it seems that the spaces between the beginning of the school year, Purim and then Pesach get shorter every year.

This year I have been considering a self-imposed quarantine. Of course the conditions thereof would be good health, in my own home, with good books... But instead I have bought a fresh notebook, ready for the to do lists.

I have made my Purim lists. I love Purim. A day full of happiness, kindness, time to spend with friends enjoying good food and music.

This is also a month full of birthdays in our family. So PG a month just full of happy things. As it says, when Adar comes, increase in happiness.

Have a happy month

Rivky

DVAR TORAH***Going Viral: Coronavirus in a Polarized World***

*by Rabbi Efrem Goldberg
(aish.com)*

We're all interconnected, whether we like it or not.

The coronavirus is spreading in China, the Middle East, Europe and has infected people in the United States, Latin America and a growing number of places, with thousands of deaths reported. Israel's Ministry of Health has urged citizens to reconsider non-essential travel abroad due to heightened fears over the spread of this potentially deadly disease.

One of the top officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in America warned this week: "Ultimately, we expect we will see community spread in this country. It's not so much a question of if this will happen anymore, but rather more a question of exactly when this will happen and how many people in this country will have severe illness." The agency itself tweeted: "Now is the time for US businesses, hospitals, and communities to begin preparing for the possible spread of #COVID19."

Indeed, now is the time to do all we can to prepare and to stop the spread of this disease, but there is also an important lesson we can learn from it.

China and the United States couldn't be further apart, not only geographically, but also in family life, social values, and religious customs. One is the

model of capitalism and the other the embodiment of communism. For these reasons and others, Americans and Chinese citizens feel so different, like there is so little we have in common. And yet coronavirus reminds us just how interconnected we are, how impacted we are by one another, and how important it is to find common ground and work together for mutual benefit.

Consider how coronavirus began and where we are now. On December 31, the Chinese authorities reported a case of pneumonia with an unknown cause in Wuhan, Hubei province to the World Health Organization. By January 3, 44 more similar cases were reported. Fast forward just two months and from that one case in China, there are now over 80,000 people diagnosed with the illness around the globe, including in this country.

What started far away threatens us here and has impacted the economy around the world, affecting supply lines, import and export, manufacturing, banking and more. We cannot afford to ignore it or dismiss it because it didn't start here or didn't begin by impacting someone we can relate to. Humanity, the world's population, are one; we are all interconnected and impacted by the behavior, policies and precautions of one another, whether we like it or not.

If we recognize what we have in common and come together to confront this deadly disease, we can isolate it, treat it, and

eliminate it. Focus on our differences, deny our common destiny, fail to cooperate and communicate, and it can grow to pandemic proportions that threaten everyone.

In some ways, this is the story and message of Purim. The Jewish people faced extinction and annihilation when they lived with an attitude of "am mefuzar u'meforad bein ha'amim – a nation disparate and separate, dispersed among disconnected peoples." The Jewish people found redemption and safety only when they followed Queen Esther's directive: "lech kenos et kol ha'Yehudim – gather together all the Jews" – become one and act in a unified way.

We describe God as our Father in Heaven. What parent is drawn to intervene and intercede on behalf of their children who cannot and will not get along, who fail to cooperate or show loyalty to one another? On the other hand, when children come together, function as a devoted family, parents are moved to do anything they can to help.

When everyone is in it for themselves, self-centered, narcissistic and concerned only for their wellbeing, they are in danger. But when we see our destiny as intertwined, when your pain hurts and threatens me and my struggles are yours, we can together endure and overcome anything.

It isn't a coincidence that the mitzvot of Purim center around connecting with others, being of service to them and seeking to relieve

their pain. We deliver Mishloach Manos (gifts of food) to one another to further our connections and bonds and we distribute Matanos L'Evyonim, gifts to the poor to feel the pain of those less privileged.

When we are united, unified in our history and destiny, focused on what we have in common instead of what divides us, we are bigger and stronger than the sum of our parts. We are both worthy and capable of confronting, persevering and triumphing over whatever challenge or threat we face. That is the message of Purim for the Jews and perhaps that is a message of the coronavirus for humanity.

The odious virus reminds us that our actions are never local; they can have cosmic implications – for bad, but equally for good. In 1963, meteorologist Edward Lorenz introduced what he called the "butterfly effect." He demonstrated that the flapping of a butterfly's wing in Australia can cause a tornado in Kansas, a monsoon in Indonesia, or a hurricane in Boca Raton. Lorenz's thesis is part of a greater theory called chaos theory that essentially postulates that small acts can have large outcomes. Chaos theory is applied in mathematics, microbiology, computer science, economics, philosophy, physics, politics and many other fields.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks has applied chaos theory in one more realm. In his book *To Heal a Fractured World*, he coined the phrase "chaos theory of virtue,"

demonstrating how small acts of kindness can have immeasurable consequences on the world. If one person in an isolated area can spread something that has impacted the whole world for the bad, one person, anywhere in the world, can infect the world with goodness and positivity.

We are living in an increasingly polarized world and at an increasingly partisan time. There are conflicts and tensions between countries and there are divisions and discords within nations, peoples, religions, and families.

In that atmosphere, coronavirus not only challenges us, but can teach us. Should we focus on our differences, fail to cooperate or come together, we will all be threatened as a result. On the other hand, if we find common ground, we can collaborate and eliminate a threat by coming together.

Never underestimate the next act of virtue you do. Flap your wings and it can change the whole world. As we begin the month of Adar and count down to the celebration of Purim let us hope and pray that the only thing going viral is a spirit of cooperation, unity, and love.

SERVICE TIMES

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday & Public Holidays 8:00

Monday to Friday 7:15

9/03 (Fast of Esther): 7:00

10/3 (Purim): 6:45

26/3 (Rosh Chodesh) 7:00

Shabbat & Festivals 9:00

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday 6:15

from 16/3 6:00

Friday 5:45

Shabbat 6:00

From 21/03 5:45

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BAR MITZVAH

- Solly Burgin on the Bar-Mitzvah of his grandson in Israel on 7 March

ENGAGEMENTS

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the engagement of their grandson Eliezer Moshel to Chava Turteltaub in Australia.

BIRTHDAYS

- Karen Shkudsky on her 55th birthday on the 7th March.
- Henry Stock on his 80th birthday on the 30th March.

ANNIVERSARIES

- Robert & Julie Soicher on their 30th anniversary on the 18th March.

MARRIAGES

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the marriage of their grandson Mendy Sarchi to Lauren Vituli in Cape Town.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a speedy recovery to:



- Sybil Gecelter
- Kevin Hacker

BEREAVEMENTS

We wish long life to :

- Stanley Wolpe on the death of his brother Monty.

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

OXFORD SHUL INVITES YOU TO A

PURIM Celebration

TUESDAY
10 MARCH 2020
MEGILAH READING 5:15 P.M.
SEUDAH TO FOLLOW

MEAT DINNER
MUSIC | HAMANTSCHEN
FUN FOR ALL AGES
R200 per person

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