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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

March 2022

Adar II 5782

SHABBAT TIMES

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

4 & 5 March – 2 Adar II

🕒 Pekudei

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:06

11 & 12 March – 9 Adar II

🕒 Vayikra (Zachor)

🕒 6:10 – 🕒 6:59

18 & 19 March – 16 Adar II

🕒 Tzav

🕒 6:03 – 🕒 6:51

25 & 26 March – 23 Adar II

🕒 Shemini (Parah)

🕒 5:55 – 🕒 6:44

1 & 2 April – 23 Adar II

🕒 Tazria (Hachodesh)

🕒 5:48 – 🕒 6:36

RABBI'S MESSAGE

I visited Kiev in 2007. At the time my parents, may they be well, were living in Ukraine. The country, which numbers in the hundreds of thousands of Jews, boasted a few dozen of the Rebbe's Shluchim and my father answered their calling for him to serve as their Chief Rabbi, which he then did for several years. My visit was short, concentrating mainly on seeing how my parents were faring in that former USSR state. (As children, we were concerned about their living conditions in that "backward country." My few days there reassured my siblings and me that they were not living in a straw covered barn in the middle of some forest.)

It was a powerful historical trip on two levels. My own

families stem from there. On my mother's side is her paternal grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Lipsker, who was the Rabbi of Poltava, which is situated halfway between Kiev and Kharkiv. My own paternal grandfather, Chaim, was born in Snovsk, some 230 km Northeast of the capital. Ukraine is also the birthplace of the Chassidic movement and I was able to visit the burial sites of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chassidism, as well as that of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Lyadi, the founder of Chabad Chassidism, in Haditch and that of his son, Rabbi Dovber, in Nizhin.

While I was there I also had the privilege of meeting some of the Rebbe's Shluchim to that country and to visit numerous Shuls and Chabad Houses. I was touched by their *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice), their willingness to give up so much to be part of the Rebbe's Army and to be part of the revival of a community afflicted by the systematic suppression of Judaism over seven decades of Soviet rule.

Thirty years earlier, it had been Rivky's and my own great privilege and merit to join this same Army as Shluchim. We said farewell to my family members (both my older sister and younger brother lived in New York then, as did most of my parents' siblings) and boarded the taxi which would take us from our apartment on 806 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn to JFK Airport and onward to an SAA flight. In the cab, I thought of what I was

giving up in exchange for this great blessing of becoming a Shaliach. I would now be far from family and physically distant from the Rebbe, whose headquarters had been literally 100 meters away at the iconic number 770. There would be products I was accustomed to, in particular specialty Kosher ones, that I would miss. All that *mesirus nefesh* was worth it for the merit of the holy mission ahead.

Over the years, the availability of foodstuffs and other comforts increased in this country. Although my family and Chabad headquarters remained 13,000 km away, it became closer via ever improving and cheaper methods of communication.

In Ukraine I came face-to-face with actual *mesirus nefesh*. I heard the stories and met the people who serve the communities of the many cities we hearing on the news every day: Kiev and Odessa, Kharkiv and Donetsk, Zhitomir and Dnipro. They became part of my parents' extended family and we heard their names spoken of frequently. Now, this was *mesirus nefesh* on a whole new level. It was not about the scarcity of Chalav Yisrael dairy products or a steady supply of Kosher meat. Some of these young families were living in far-flung tiny hamlets, with barely any essential amenities (basically under the horrific conditions I had feared my parents might have been). Medical care was poor and expectant mothers flew to Israel ahead of their confinements.

Now that, I thought, *is mesirus nefesh*.

The names of those cities and towns have suddenly become familiar to us all over the past week. Impassionate videos of the Shluchim, describing their Shabbos with their communities, their daring rescue missions along with their flock to places of safety. Although most are foreign nationals and could have easily left when the tension was mounting, they chose to remain as long as possible with their congregations to provide material help, emotional support and spiritual guidance. This is a whole new, unfathomable level of *mesirus nefesh*!

As baby boomers in Western Europe, my friends and I grew up naively believing that wars, at least on that continent, were firmly part of history. The teachers in our Brussels school shared with us stories of the May '40 German invasion and the subsequent years of occupation they had suffered. They also reassured us that the world had learnt from the lessons of WW2 and that we would be blessed never to witness War in our lifetimes. I doubt many of them are still alive but never in their worst nightmare would they have predicted the current *déjà-vu*.

As a Chabad chassid, I grew up with the belief that every world crisis, in fact every passing day, brings us closer to the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4). PG may that day arrive very soon. Until then may Hashem protect the Jews and all the people of Ukraine and all affected by this calamity.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I cannot begin to understand how one human being picks up a gun and shoots another one. I cannot imagine how a tank driver rolls his tank into a city and shells anyone, let alone a nursery school where innocent children are eating breakfast. How does a pilot fly his plane over a city and drop bombs on people who are wanting to go about their day as we do? In short, (or long) I can't understand war.

Together with so many others I am listening to the news and spending much of my time thinking of, and praying for the safety of the people, especially the many many yidden who are in so much danger.

This is my war effort.

Years ago, during one of Israel's wars, women asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe what they could do to help in the war effort. He replied that they should light shabbat candles. (If they already do, they should make extra sure to light on time, give a coin to tzeddokka and pray for the welfare of the soldiers and people of the country). The Rebbe explained that the acronym for Neirot Shabbat Kodesh (candles of holy shabbos) is NeSheK, which literally means ammunition. Shabbos candles are our spiritual ammunition. It is one of the things we can do in our war effort.

May Hashem listen to our efforts and protect all those in danger.

Have a good month.

Rivky

SERVICE TIMES

Please check with the office if you wish to come to shul on a particular day to ensure there will be a service.

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday & Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
<small>16/02 (Fast of Esther): 7:00; 17/02 (Purim): 6:45</small>	
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
from 20/03	6:00
Friday	6:00
Shabbat	6:00

DVAR TORAH

A Feast and a Fast

(MeaningfulLife.com)

Why was annihilation decreed on the Jews of that generation? Because they enjoyed the feast of the wicked [King Achashveirosh]

(Talmud, Megillah 12a)

The Jewish people had many compelling reasons to attend the week-long banquet thrown by King Achashveirosh to celebrate the consolidation of his rule over the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire.

All residents of the capital were invited, and to turn down the royal invitation would have been a grievous insult—something that a small minority, scattered throughout the empire and threatened by many enemies, could ill afford to do. It is true that the Jews are not like the other nations of the world, whose fortune rises and falls with the political tide; in the words of the Talmud, "The people of Israel are not subject to 'fate,'" for they are under the singular province of G-d. Indeed, our millennia of survival as a "lone sheep surrounded by seventy wolves" belies every law of history. But it is also true that we are commanded to construct a natural "vessel" through which the divine protection and blessing might flow. Surely the Jews of Persia recalled the words spoken by the prophet Jeremiah seventy years earlier, when they were first exiled from their homeland: "Seek the peace of the city to which I have exiled you, and pray for it ... for in its peace shall you have peace."

And even if participating in the feast of Achashveirosh was neither desirable nor necessary, was it forbidden by the laws of

the Torah? The Book of Esther implies that it was not. We are told that Achashveirosh had instructed that no man be pressured to partake of any food or drink that did not agree with his constitution or his religious beliefs. He had even arranged for kosher food for his Jewish subjects, in full conformity with the exacting standards of none other than Mordechai himself! (see Esther 1:8; Targum *ibid.*; Talmud, Megillah 12a).

In any case, even if there were something amiss in the Jewish attendance at the feast of Achashveirosh, was this a transgression so terrible that it warranted Haman being given license to "annihilate, slaughter and destroy every Jew, young and old, women and children, in a single day"?

Jews in Politics

But the problem was not that they participated in the feast; it was, as the above-quoted Talmudic passage emphasizes, that "they enjoyed the feast" of the Emperor of Persia.

Certainly, the Jew in exile is commanded to employ the tools that, by natural criteria, aid his survival under foreign rule. But he must always remember that this is no more than a "vessel" for G-d's protection. Politics, business, natural law—these are no more than a front, an elaborate facade which G-d desires that we construct to encase and disguise His supra-natural providence of our lives; they are not something to be revered, much less to get excited about.

But the Jews experienced joy at having been invited to Achashveirosh's feast. As they took their places among the Persians, Medians, Babylonians, Chaldeans and the other

nationalities of the realm, they felt content and secure. After seventy years of exile, they had "made it"; they were now a member of equal standing in the family of nations at Achashveirosh's table, with glatt kosher dinners issuing from the royal kitchens.

With their joy over their invitation to Achashveirosh's feast, the Jews disavowed their uniqueness as a nation under the special protection of G-d. Their feelings demonstrated that they now perceived the niche they had carved for themselves in the good graces of an earthly emperor as the basis for their survival. But the world they so gleefully entered is a capricious one. One day a Jew, Mordechai, is a high-ranking minister in Achashveirosh's court and another Jew, Esther, is his favorite queen; a day later, Haman becomes Prime Minister and prevails upon Achashveirosh to sign a decree of annihilation against the Jewish people.

The Reversal

When Mordechai informed Esther of Haman's plans and enjoined her to use her influence with the king to annul the decree, Esther told him to "gather all the Jews who are in Shushan, and fast for my sake—do not eat or drink for three days, night and day; I and my maidens will likewise fast. Thus I shall go to the king, against the law..." (Esther 4:16).

As Esther explained to Mordechai earlier in the same chapter, it was forbidden, on pain of death, for anyone—including the queen—to go to the king unsummoned. Esther's only chance was to charm the king into not killing her and to turn him against his favorite

minister in favor of her people. The last thing for her to do under such circumstances was to approach the king looking like a woman who had not eaten for three days!

So would dictate the norms of human nature and palace politics. But Esther recognized that the key to saving her people was to reestablish the relationship between G-d and Israel on its original, supra-natural terms. The Jews must repent their regression to a political people; they must draw on their only true resource—G-d's love for them and His commitment to their survival. They must storm the gates of heaven with their fasting and prayer, and rouse His compassion for His people.

Of course, she must go to Achashveirosh and do everything in her power to make him change his mind. But this is merely a formality. She must go through the motions of doing things the "normal" way, because that is what G-d wants her to do—because this is the garment in which He chooses to cloak His salvation. But she will not appeal less fervently to G-d because she fears it will make her less attractive to Achashveirosh—that would be like a soldier discarding his rifle because it creases his uniform.

Thus Esther rectified the error of those who enjoyed Achashveirosh's feast. They had exalted the facade, abandoning the essence of Jewish survival for the sake of the external vessel. Esther's approach to dealing with the threat of Haman's decree reiterated the true priority of the Jew, and evoked G-d's reassertion of His singular providence over the fate of Israel.

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Philip & Rila Jacobson on the birth of twin grandsons.
- Doris Samson on the birth of a great grandson in England.

ANNIVERSARIES

- Clive & Rhona Gilbert on their 50th anniversary on the 19th March.
- Robert & Hayley Gecelter on their 20th anniversary on 19th March.
- Raymond & Hilary Isakow on their 40th anniversary on the 21st March.

BIRTHDAYS

- Frank Gonsenhauser on his 80th birthday on the 5th March.
- Denise Buxbaum on his 70th birthday on the 18th March.

- Edward Pokroy on his 80th birthday on the 23rd March.
- John Brick on his 88th birthday on the 25th March.
- Valarie Harris on her 65th birthday on the 28th March.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Raymond Isakow

**FAST OF ESTHER****WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH**

Fast begins: 5:01 a.m. -- Fast ends: 6:37 p.m.

Shacharit: 7:00 a.m. – Mincha/Maariv: 6:15 p.m.

Megilah reading: 6:45 p.m.

**PURIM****THURSDAY 17 MARCH**

Shacharit: 6:45 a.m.; Megilah Reading: 7:30 a.m. (approximately)

Second Megilah Reading 10:30 a.m.