

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

May 2022

Iyar 5782

### SHABBAT TIMES

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

6 & 7 May – 6 Iyar

🕒 Kedoshim

🕒 5:12 – 🕒 6:06

13 & 14 May – 13 Iyar

🕒 Emor

🕒 5:12 – 🕒 6:06

20 & 21 May – 20 Iyar

🕒 Behar

🕒 5:09 – 🕒 6:00

27 & 28 May – 27 Iyar

🕒 Bechukotai

🕒 5:09 – 🕒 5:58

3 & 4 June – 4 Sivan

🕒 Bechukotai

🕒 5:09 – 🕒 5:58

### RABBI'S MESSAGE

I have stopped counting the number of airport trips I have made in the last four weeks. Pre-Pesach, it was the joyous hugging of visiting family members, weary from many hours of travelling but pleased to be coming home for the holiday. That is always special. We cram the multiple suitcases into every available space, squeeze into the car and the atmosphere in the car is electric.

The past few days, I've made the same journey, this time to see people off. Same squeezing into the car, same route, albeit in

reverse. But the mood is altogether different. Much of the ride is spent in contemplative silence, dreaming about the next visit.

The way back, alone in the empty vehicle, is horrific. My coping mechanism consists of taking a chocolate bar with me, to distract me on the lonely journey. Apparently chocolate fixes everything, but obviously not absolutely everything. It dulls the pain, just a little, but the pleasure only lasts a few minutes. The car is still empty and silent.

Years ago, I used to stop off at Eastgate Mall and purchase an electronic gadget. Maybe it worked for a bit longer, but TG with the current size of the family it has become somewhat unaffordable.

Since our borders reopened and flights in and out of the country resumed, I have been to the OR Tambo International terminal numerous times. Either to collect/drop or as a traveller myself. In the early days it was simply a horrible experience. Access to the terminals was via one door only, passengers could not be dropped off outside the entrance, and the vast halls

sounded hollow, the sound of excited travellers and hurried footsteps conspicuously absent.

The world had become so small. Every corner of the globe could be reached within 24 hours of air travel. Then suddenly, the world became huge again, and our friends and family on other continents felt so remote and distant. We all suffered having to forego in person presence at significant life cycle events and milestones.

Much has changed since 2020. Covid testing stations have sprung up just before the check-in counters. The price of parking has increased tremendously. Shops on the mezzanine level have re-opened. The food court has a diverse offering once again. But by far the most exciting thing is the sight and sound of people. Albeit masked, one can recognise the look of happiness and anticipation on faces. The airport tells a story of normalcy and of hope. The world is slowly shrinking again. That thought helps to mitigate the pain of saying good bye, as I begin to formulate plans in my mind for my own next trip.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

**FROM THE REBBETZIN**

Today I feel so depleted, there is no sound of baby talking, the beds are stripped and some of the linen is already hanging on the line.

Other suitcases are waiting their turns to be filled and returned to New York.

We were blessed with a special pesach, after two Pesachs alone, we were able to have family again BH.

And today it is all over, and tomorrow it is back to work. Ita is going as well, joining her siblings in New York. BH our baby is able to leave our nest.

Strange how instinctive it is to concentrate on the hard and difficult... everyone is leaving rather than so many were here for an amazing Pesach. We will be empty nesters rather than seeing how beautifully Ita has turned out.

This is what I call the Haman instinct. After Haman had been promoted, gotten everyone in the country to bow to him and had all his wicked plans approved, he walked out and saw Mordechai sitting at the gate, refusing to bow to him. Haman dejectedly told his wife of all the great things that happened to him and ended, "all this is worth nothing to me when I see Mordechai the Jew..."

I am trying so hard not to fall prey to the Haman instinct, and concentrate on the abundant blessings we have. May Hashem bless everyone with only things to be grateful and happy about.

Have a good month.

*Rivky*

**SERVICE TIMES**  
**SHACHARIT (A.M.)**

Monday & Thursday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30

**MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)**

Friday	5:30
From 13/05	5:20

**DVAR TORAH**
**11 Facts About the  
Month of Iyar Every Jew  
Should Know**

*By Leibel Gniwisch (chabad.org)*

**1. Iyar Is Both the Eighth  
and Second Month of the  
Hebrew Calendar**

Both Nisan and Tishrei are referred to as the start of the Jewish calendar. Iyar is the second month from Nisan and month number eight from Tishrei.

**2. The Torah Has Two  
Other Names for This Month**

In the Five Books of Moses, the Hebrew months don't have distinct names. Instead, Nisan is called "the first month," Iyar, "the second month," and so on.

In the prophets, Iyar is called "the Month of Radiance" (Chodesh Ziv), because it is when the trees are bright with blossoms.

The names we know today, the Talmud tells us, were adopted during the first Babylonian exile.

**3. Iyar Also Means Light**

Iyar is related to the Hebrew word for light, "ohr." Midrash explains that it was named for the manna which began to fall during Iyar, a month after the Jews left Egypt. The manna was given with divine radiance.

The Akkadian equivalent of Iyar, Ayyāru, means flower

**4. There Is a Special  
Mitzvah for Every Day of Iyar**

For seven weeks, from the second day of Passover to Shavuot, the Jewish people count the Omer, marking the passage of 49 days between these two holidays. Each day,

we recite another blessing, as the counting of each day is its own mitzvah.

Sefirat HaOmer (counting the Omer) extends from 16 Nisan through the entirety of Iyar until Shavuot (6 Sivan). Thus, Iyar is the only month in which the Omer is counted for all its 29 days.

**5. The "Second Passover"  
Is Celebrated on 14 Iyar**

In Temple times, the Second Passover (Pesach Sheni) was observed by one who could not—by virtue of being impure or in a distant place—bring the Paschal offering during Passover. He was given a second chance to eat the sacrifice a month later on the night subsequent to 14 Iyar.

Today, when sacrifices are no longer brought, we commemorate the Second Passover by eating matzah.

One of the Second Passover's themes is making up for one's past mistakes.

**6. Lag BaOmer Is  
Celebrated on 18 Iyar**

Before his death, Rabbi Shimon bar (son of) Yochai, a 1st-century Talmudic sage, requested that his anniversary of passing be celebrated instead of mourned. He died on the 18th of Iyar in 160 CE, and that day, called Lag BaOmer (33rd of the Omer), has been commemorated since.

Lag BaOmer also marks the end of the plague that struck Rabbi Akiva's students. The Talmud relates that 24,000 disciples of Rabbi Akiva died in the period between Passover and Shavuot. The Talmud states that they died because

they failed to respect each other.

### 7. The Lag BaOmer Parade Celebrates Jewish Pride

When the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of righteous memory, witnessed the dearth of Jewish literacy in New York City in the 1940s, he established the National Committee for the Furtherance of Jewish Education ("Shaloh"), which encouraged Jewish parents to give their children a Jewish education.

One of its programs, "Mesibos Shabbos," arranged small gatherings for these children on Shabbat and Jewish holidays in synagogues around New York. In 1942, the first public "Mesibos Shabbos" gathering was held outside Lubavitch World Headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway. A handful of children sang Jewish songs, gave charity and said blessings. This eventually evolved into the "Lag BaOmer parade."

On April 29th, 1956, the Lubavitcher Rebbe led the first large-scale parade at 770. Two thousand Jewish children heard the Rebbe address subjects such as Torah study and the significance of Lag BaOmer. Then, they marched holding signs that promoted Jewish observance. Ever since, a Lag BaOmer parade has been held at 770 whenever Lag BaOmer falls on a Sunday, when public school students may also attend. The parade format has been adopted by Chabad houses and communities around the world.

### 8. Iyar Is a Month of Healing

Iyar is a month of healing. The Chassidic masters see this in the month's acronym: אֵי יָר, "I am the L-rd who heals you."

The Jewish year is a miniature playbook of the entirety of a Jew's divine service. Nisan, the first month, is all about birth and renewal. We just "went out of Egypt" in a spiritual sense and are now ready to fulfill G-d's commandments with feeling.

Iyar represents the return to mundanity—our first day back at work after vacation. At this point, it becomes difficult to infuse our Torah-learning and mitzvah-doing with the excitement of novelty.

This is where healing comes in. G-d says, "All the sicknesses . . . I will not place upon you, for I am the L-rd who heals you." In other words, G-d is giving us preventative medicine—the ability to fight apathy and to experience our divine service with passion and excitement. But although G-d provides assistance we must do the legwork. If we make the effort to view the world through the eyes of a child, with openness and curiosity, we can keep the forces of apathy at bay.<sup>21</sup>

### 9. Iyar Has Two Spellings

Divorce is serious business in Jewish law, and divorce documents must be written with the utmost care and precision.

An interesting discussion in the laws of divorce documents surrounds the spelling of the month of Iyar. Is it spelled אֵי יָר with one yud or אֵי יָרֵר with two yuds?

Rabbi Yaakov ben Moshe Moelin, the Maharil, posits that a man must give his wife two gittin during Iyar, one with אֵי יָר and one with אֵי יָרֵר. Rabbi Moshe Isserless, the Rema, writes that because of this doubt, unless there is a pressing need, some refrain from getting divorced during Iyar at all!

In practice, however, the accepted custom is to write Iyar with two yuds.

### 10. It Recalls the Patriarchs

The accepted custom is to spell it with two yuds, serving as an acrostic for Abraham, Isaac (Yitzchak), Jacob (Yaakov) and Rachel, the patriarchs and matriarch associated with the supernal merkavah, a Kabbalistic understanding of the divine revelation in this world.<sup>26</sup>

### 11. Iyar's Zodiac Sign Is Taurus (the Bull)

In Jewish mystical thought, the bull symbolizes the animal soul. The animal soul, like the bull, is unruly but can be productive if harnessed. Chassidic thought understands that the negative tendencies of our animal soul stem from an amorphous koach hamit'aveh, a force that desires. Without a harness, the "desirous force" will lean toward self-gratification, but with a yoke, the animal soul can be abundantly productive.

Our mission in Iyar is to tame the bull. Each night, after we've counted the Omer, we say a little prayer wherein we ask G-d to rectify a small part of our animal soul. (Read more about that in A Spiritual Guide to the Counting of the Omer.) We hope that by the time Shavuot comes around, we will be a bit more ready to receive G-d's word.

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great granddaughter in Johannesburg.
- Doris Samson on the birth of a great granddaughter in Manchester.

**BAT MITZVAHS**

- Maurice & Rose Oskowitz on the bat mitzvah of their granddaughter.

**ENGAGEMENTS**

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the engagement of their granddaughter, Leah Flax.
- Mazel Tov to Marion Rapp on the engagement of her grandson, Daniel, to Mari Abramson.

**MARRIAGES**

- Raymond & Hilary Isakow on the marriage of their son Jonathan to Ashley Leeb on the 10th April.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Aileen Shifren on her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May.
- Freda Wolff on her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on the 10<sup>th</sup> May.

- Calmon Sarachick on his 97<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 12<sup>th</sup> May.

**REFUAH SHLEIMA**

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Raymond Isakow

**BEREAVEMENTS**

We wish long life to:

- Franky Auerbach on the death of her brother, Clive Matthews

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



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