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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

November 2020

Cheshvan/Kislev 5781

SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting
🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)
For service times see page 4

6 & 7 November – 20 Cheshvan

🕒 Vayeira
🕒 6:10 – 🕒 7:02

13 & 14 November – 27 Cheshvan

🕒 Chayei Sarah
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:08

20 & 21 November – 5 Kislev

🕒 Toldot
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:13

27 & 28 November – 12 Kislev

🕒 Vayeitzei
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:19

4 & 5 December – 19 Kislev

🕒 Vayishlach
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:24

RABBI'S MESSAGE

My earliest Shabbat memories go back to my preschool days, growing up in Copenhagen. At such extreme latitudes, Friday night was a strictly winter-only event. With Shabbat coming in as early as 3:20 p.m. on the short December days, even us little guys were able to be up for the entire Shabbat meal. On the other hand, for many months, I recall feeling extremely cheated as my mother made Kiddush for us while the sun shone brightly—obviously staying up until dark (sunset 9:58 p.m. in June) was out of the question.

The year I entered Primary School, we moved to Belgium, where my father took up the position of Chief Rabbi of Brussels. The main shul of the Communauté Israélite Orthodoxe de Bruxelles was in the Anderlecht section of the city; our home, half an hour's walk from there. At first I resented the interminable downhill trek to the Shul and dreaded the arduous return home. It did not take me long to work out that I was being granted a couple of hours of quality time, mostly one-on-one, with my father. To date I still recall many of the stories he shared with me to pass the time.

My post high school years took me to various Yeshivot around the world. It was during this time that I learnt to appreciate the true spiritual dimension of the holy day, to value Shabbat as an opportunity to be freed from the routine of the week and to let the Neshoma soar.

It was not until I married, settled in South Africa and children started coming along, that I began to fully appreciate the value of a family Shabbat—a unique island in time to stop and connect with every member of the household. While we frequently had guests gracing our table and absolutely

loved it, Rivky and I endeavoured, whenever possible, that either Friday night or Shabbat lunch were guest-free so that the kids could interact with us uninhibited.

Shabbat during the months of April to August of 2020 are personally most memorable. Those were the sad months when the lockdown regulations and then health concerns kept our shul's doors shut for services. One of the drawbacks of being a congregational rabbi is the need to “work” on Shabbat. Sad as it was to be unable to minister to my community on the holy day, the silver lining to this big, dark cloud was that Shabbat was mine and mine only—to pray, study, read, relax. Another unforgettable 2020 Shabbat memory was the sound of Lecha Dodi filling the Shul on re-opening night, albeit muffled by face masks.

Shabbat 6/7 November is the (proudly South African) worldwide Shabbat project. As each of you focus on how you can make Shabbat a greater part of your life, think back of your own personal Shabbat memories. And project what your future Shabbat observances may be like.

On 1 January 2000, the New York Times ran a Millennium edition. It was a special issue that featured three front pages. One had the news from 1 January 1900. The second was the actual news of the day. And then they had a third front page, projecting future events of 1 January 2100. This fictional page included news items like a welcome to the fifty-first state: Cuba, a discussion as to whether robots should be allowed to vote. And so on. And in addition to the fascinating articles, there was one more thing. Down on the bottom of the Year 2100 front page was the candle lighting time in New York for that day. When the production manager of the New York Times – an Irish Catholic – was asked about it, his answer was right on the mark, “We don’t know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But of one thing you can be certain, that in the year 2100 Jewish women will be lighting Shabbos candles.”

I cannot fathom what my future memorable Shabbat experiences will be any more than the New York Times could accurately predict what their front page would contain 100 years hence. But I am certain that Shabbat will be part of my life for PG many more decades.

May we all merit to observe Hashem’s special weekly gift for years to come, in peace, health and prosperity. And may each be memorable.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

This Sunday, PG, will be Chaya Mushka’s Bat Mitzvah, our oldest grandchild celebrating her graduation into adulthood.

Of course there are all the regular emotions: immense gratitude to Hashem for all the blessings he has bestowed on us; wonder at how fast time goes; horror at how old I am getting; naches from this amazing girl and her siblings, cousins, parents, aunts and uncles (k.a.h).

But I am also feeling sad. Sad because I am here and they are there and we are not together celebrating this auspicious day.

At the beginning of this year, I looked ahead, planning, debating, figuring out how this would be a year of travel. I looked at the calendar and tried to figure out dates, budgets and plans: Where would we travel? How many times would we travel? Would go together or separately?

Then everything changed and we did not travel at all. Not even to my parents here in Johannesburg, never mind to my in-laws and children in other parts of the world. We joined simchas, where possible, over Zoom and continued through this world chaos to thank Hashem for the blessings each time.

So although I planned to be there for this Bat Mitzvah, Hashem has different plans. I will celebrate from here, PG and I will continue to thank Hashem for the blessings. I will pray that he grants Chaya Mushka, my children and grandchildren lives full of happiness, health and brocha. I will ask Him that the world that she is stepping into should be one of tranquility and peace. May we all be able to share simchas in person again.

Have a good month

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

Covid Shabbat

*By Simon Shear
(theshabbosproject.org)*

Do you know that the word ‘quarantine’ derives from the Venetian quarantena, referring to the forty days of isolation ship passengers were subject to during the time of the Black Death?

Yes, of course you do. By now you know everything there is to know about pandemics and infection control. You know the cultural history of the 1918 flu well enough to teach an introductory class. You could diagram the molecular structure of a viral envelope with your eyes closed.

So if I write a post saying that Shabbat is a kind of spiritual quarantine, you’d roll your eyes and stop reading immediately.

Thankfully, this is something completely different. It’s a post about how Shabbat is not a kind of spiritual quarantine.

In fact, quarantine is more akin to a mockery of the day of rest; an ersatz Shabbat of enforced cessation.

After all, for a ‘day of rest’, Shabbat can be full of activity. And while it is useful to simplify the melachot, the activities prohibited on Shabbat, under the general rubric of ‘work’, something tends to get lost in translation, prompting the Shabbat-curious to ask a whole lot of pointed questions: You can’t drive round the block but you can walk 10km to shul? You can’t switch on your kettle but, depending on which authority you follow, you could use an urn and follow a procedure more complex than the Pentagon’s

nuclear war scenario planning to make a cup of tea? I know which of these sound more like work.

In many ways, our days of lockdown look a whole lot like what a day without 'work' might look like. We Skype and we Zoom, we spend hour after hour scrolling Netflix and Uber Eats and Instacart (who knew the end of the world would involve so much scrolling?), we get caught in angry, labyrinthine arguments on Twitter and Facebook ... but we do it all from the couch.

You are wherever your thoughts are, Rabbi Nachman teaches, and while our bodies may be comfortably situated on a nest of goose down pillows, our thoughts on a speedboat on a Florida lake, litigating the scientific method with a guy who calls himself MasksAreTyranny420 on social media.

Worse, in a way, was when my thoughts were kind of nowhere at all. When work had slowed to a pandemic-induced trickle, but I was nonetheless on standby, awaiting instructions. I could neither switch off completely and read a detective story, nor was I actively engaged in money-making activity. My attention was divided, and being neither here nor there, it was nowhere.

'Rest' is not always all it's cracked up to be. There's 'bed rest' enforced by doctors; not something most of us would ever choose. And recently, we found ourselves confined to our homes where if we were rested - spared the daily commute, shielded from chatty colleagues - we were nonetheless restive. Stupefied by containment, filled with nervous energy usually expended at the gym or in strenuous social

engagements, we descended into a spiral of minute hyper activity, clicking and pacing, muting and unmuting, liking, and blocking and retweeting. All that frenetic micromovement made it hard to focus on any one thing. With my attention so addled and divided, it felt like I had a kind of mind myopia, as if my brain forgot to put on its glasses.

That's the opposite of Shabbat. On Shabbat, we work to see past the frenzy of the mundane and perceive a deeper reality. It's an opportunity not to rationalise and calculate, but to exist fully in the moment. 'Be in the moment' is something your spinning instructor or tofu dealer might say, but actually achieving it is the work of a lifetime.

Likely you've come across panegyrics to Shabbat extolling the benefits of taking a day to recharge your batteries, so you can tackle the work week ahead. That's not wrong, but it's incidental. The essence of the day is not about means and ends and calculating utility and satiating wants, as if the day is a kind of executive retreat, SHABBAT™ by McKinsey & Company.

Properly spent, the day is not so much seeing past the cold instrumentality of modern life, but living beyond it. Transcending grinding rational calculus and experiencing the joy of the moment - a moment extended in time and space, across one day a week.

Crucially, it's not a transcendence attained in solitude, seeking enlightenment on a bleak mountain peak. In its fullest expression, Shabbat is a community activity, in which the coarse matter of life itself is elevated beyond the merely

instrumental. We eat, drink and sing, and we do it together. (Global health emergency permitting.)

The process of connecting with what really matters is intimately connected with the question of who matters. Hospitality is fundamental to Judaism, and the injunction to welcome guests holds especially on holidays and Shabbat. No one should be left behind, no one should be forgotten.

By contrast, the lockdown in many ways did enable us to perceive the value each of us holds for the other, but at the same only increased existing hierarchies. As Just in Time supply chains strained and broke, as we became acutely aware of what we could and couldn't do without - what really mattered - so we came to rely ever more on the essential workers (many previously denigrated as disposable and low skilled) who drove delivery trucks and operated the supermarket cash points and looked after our elderly, exposed to infection, for low pay, with often minimal protective equipment.

Any major event can help us understand the world. A day like Shabbat exists to change it. To remind us not to confuse our intrinsic value with a self-contained utility-producing machine.

Quarantine was frustrating because we were immobilised while the world kept moving. Shabbat reminds us that when the treadmill stops, we're not actually making any less ground. It's an opportunity to reflect on how we can make real progress together, or frantically spin our wheels apart.

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Naomi Schmidt on the birth of a great grandson.
- Mazaltov to Julie Lampert on the birth of a great grandson in London and a great grandson in Los Angeles.

BAR & BAT-MITZVAHS

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the barmitzvah of their grandson Avrohom Dovid Fox.
- Rabbi Yossi & Rivky Chaikin on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter, Chaya Mushka Glick.

ENGAGEMENTS

- Martin and Sylvia Lewison on the engagement of their daughter Kiera to Eyal Okev.

- Mazaltov to Karen, Alan & Ben Shkudsky and to Marion Rapp on the engagement of their son, brother and grandson Martin Cook to Helene Rosenblatt.

BIRTHDAYS

- Flory Mencer on the occasion of her 93rd birthday on the 1st November.
- Willie Wittert on the occasion of his 94th birthday on the 9th November.
- David Jacobson on the occasion of his 55th birthday on the 18th November.
- Leah Lurie on the occasion of her 80th birthday on the 21st November.
- Clive Gilbert on the occasion of his 75th birthday on the 29th November.

ANNIVERSARIES

- Hymie & Judith Feinberg on the occasion of their 62nd wedding anniversary on the 30th November.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Ann Benard

**BEREAVEMENTS**

We wish long life to

- Natie Aremband on the death of his sister, Esther.

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

SERVICE TIMES

All services are currently by prior booking only. Phone the office for details and to book.

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday & Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
<i>17/11: 7:00 (Rosh Chodesh)</i>	
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
Friday	6:00
Shabbat	6:00
from 06/11	6:15



6/7 NOVEMBER