

Harare Lemba Synagogue

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President's message.

This newsletter is our official publication through which we plan to communicate with our membership, the Lemba community worldwide, our sponsors , our friends and well wishers so that we keep them updated about what's going on at the Harare Lemba Synagogue. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kulanu and our donors and everybody who has and is contributing to make the HLS dream a reality. We started the HLS to create a community for the Lemba who migrated from the villages to the cities for one reason or the other. Back in the villages we live in closely nit communities but when we come to the cities we are like fish that have been taken out of water. Now we have somewhere were we can meet , interact and practice our religion.

Its slightly more than 3 years since we started the HLS , it was a slow start with a handful of people coming to attend services on shabbat. However the past 3 years have seen us grow from a congregation of a handful of Lemba to a congregation of 75 strong people of different tribes and races. We have been welcoming everybody who is interested in practicing Judaism be they Lemba or not. We have been also welcoming visitors from all over the world . Jews who come to Zimbabwe for business or tourism and are in need of a place where they can attend services or celebrate chagim. We have had 4 visitors so far this year from the UK , the USA and South Africa

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We are happy that we have been able to provide such services and we hope we will always continue to provide those services.

To Kulanu , our donors and friends we would like to say thank you for helping us create this community. Our children will grow up within this community and system that you have helped us create. On shabbat and chagim the HLS is always a hive of activity; noisy kids playing together , and adults davening. After the service we sit to eat lunch , a time to talk about the villages that we left but are still linked ,this community that we now belong to, and our collective hopes for the future as the HLS community. During the week days women come to work on their mushroom project and students come to attend their Judaica lessons. This now truly feels like a community and we would like to thank all who have contributed to make it happen.

Todah Rabbah

Modreck

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2016 High holidays to remember

This year 5777 was the fourth time that we celebrated Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur at HLS. Our previous celebrations were pretty basic for several reasons the main one being we are still learning about rabbinical Judaism having been in isolation for hundreds of years. Our previous Rosh Hashanah observation involved the ritual of eating apples dipped in honey and blowing the shofar. This year it was different because we had learnt a lot about Rosh Hashanah and also because unlike the previous years we had Machzorim sourced for us by Barbara Vinick of Kulanu.

Our understanding of the Rosh Hashanah service was helped by the lessons that I did with Jevin Eagle (USA) and Abe Reichman (Israel) over Skype. Between them the two gentlemen taught me about the background of Rosh Hashanah, the sources of the holiday in the Torah, the halachah/laws and Minhags/ customs associated with it: We learnt about the structure of the Rosh Hashanah service and how I was supposed to go about leading it: A lot of questions that I had were answered, Like why we call it the New Year yet it was observed on the first and second day of the 7th month, like why it was never referred to as Rosh Hashanah in the Torah, why we have more than 1 new year in Judaism: The result was the Rosh Hashanah service had a lot of meaning for us and In Brighton Zhou we had a natural Baal Tekia: The young man is a talented shofar blower, the notes came out clear and loud: Hashem willing we will get him trained by a professional baal Tekia so he can also train others in the community:

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Zhou practicing to blow the shofar before the Erev Rosh Hashanah service.

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The ladies started preparing for the holidays two days before baking cakes and sweet round pancakes : We had a hive of activity the whole week leading to the holidays: I taught what I learnt with Abe and Jevin and what I learnt from reading books in our library as well as from the internet to a group of adults I study with on Tuesdays and Thursdays; We had a Rosh Hashanah evening service on Sunday , shacharit and mincha service on Monday and Shacharit Service on Tuesday: We had an all day Yom Kippur service on Wednesday: We had a wonderful high holiday period thanks to Kulanu for sponsoring us, thanks to Abe and Jevin or teaching us .



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High holidays in Eretz Israel

Simcha Natasha Butchart

I have officially been in Jerusalem for approximately two months. Two months of which , have been unique, amazing and on some occasions filled with anxiety. Upon arrival I was rather concerned about the language barrier. My spoken Hebrew definitely needed some exercise and walking in the streets of Jerusalem was the best way to do so. It was perfectly normal to have someone stop me on the street and ask me



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directions in Hebrew, at that moment I realized I did not know how to
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say ‘ around the corner, or turn right or left’ I eventually began to settle in after losing my way on the streets of Jerusalem and learn to eventually navigate my way home. I remember being so proud of myself when someone asked for directions and I was able to respond in Hebrew immediately without the usual awkward pause while I try and process in my head how to respond.

I am currently studying at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. I am so grateful to have this opportunity to advance my knowledge in Judaism while living in Jerusalem. I am currently doing the Year program, in the Social Justice Track. Studying at Pardes for the year means that I have the wonderful opportunity of experiencing the Chagim in Jerusalem. It is astonishing to have so much choice and variety to Kosher food, Judaica, endless choices of Shuls to attend on Shabbat and Chaggim.

One memorable moment was Selichot at the Western wall before Yom Kippur. It was overwhelming in a positive way to see such a huge crowd of people gather at the Western Wall for Selichot that night. Praying all together in one voice, and most of all for me saying all my prayers in Hebrew. Many books and Siddurim here are mostly in Hebrew, whereas I was used to a siddur with Hebrew and English.

Yom Kippur was a totally different experience. All businesses close on this day, there are no cars on the streets. The atmosphere changes and there is a quiet stillness reminding you that it indeed is an important day. Children play and cycle in the streets. As I walked to Shul I was greeted

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by the silence in Jerusalem, and on my way I saw many people dressed in white, making their way to Shul as well.

Sukkot made me somewhat nostalgic as I began to think of people back home and wish they could experience the festive feeling in Jerusalem during this time. It is hard to have access to kosher food and products in my country. Let alone be able to buy a Lulav and Etrog for Sukkot. Jerusalem has all this in abundance. I love the fact that a stranger can walk past me and say ‘Chag Sameach’ and I respond. I then see the same stranger the next day , and the next day again, eventually this person becomes a familiar stranger. Jerusalem is a big City, but it is also a small City too.

I have so much to share about my experiences while here in Israel and will continue to share my Journey. I look forward to the day that people from my community will have the same experiences as I, and will have greater chances to explore Jerusalem and Israel in a way that is personal for them. I would love to be able to help people from my community to share their story, and make the great journey to visit the land of Israel.

A final word to everyone back home , work hard on your spoken Hebrew it will come in handy when you arrive here . You will thank me for this advice later

S. A. N. Butchart

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THE Emergency food program

Its now 4 months since we started the emergency food program: a program which was necessitated the existence of a 2 year drought coupled with an economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe: We appealed to the outside Jewish world and through Kulanu we got money to buy food for needy families: Every month the HLS food committee has been buying foodstuffs worth \$1000. We have been buying beans, dried Kapenda fish, Maize meal, milk, and flour.



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There have been noticeable changes in the congregation since the program was started; Kids who were malnourished are now looking healthy, breast feeding mothers have enough milk for their suckling babies stressed fathers who couldn't provide food for their families have peace of mind. We are a happy healthy community thanks to Kulanu and to our donors. We intend for this program to run until June next year and up to that time we expect the country to have good crop harvests and we will see an end to the severe food shortages.

Below Is what Tafadzwa Hwingwiri a married father of 2 has to say about the program

“life has become difficult to live here in Zimbabwe considering the harsh economic conditions of the country and drought which has seen the majority populace suffer. For us Lemba we are very grateful after being rescued from such a scenario . The food program has seen us having adequate meals daily..The monthly food ratio has relieved us physically ..socially ..morally and even psychologically. As a family our budget is no longer strained since basic needs are now being



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addressed by the program .The little income that we get is now able to address some issues such as rentals rates and school fees which had become difficult to meet before the provisions

we continue pray to G..d that the program may stay till the economy stabilizes and a bumper harvest.”

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The Buhera irrigation project

The Buhera irrigation scheme was born out of the need to find a lasting solution to food shortages for both the people in the village and the members of the Harare Lemba Synagogue. Frequent droughts and unpredictable rainfall patterns have all contributed to perennial food shortages experienced in Zimbabwe as a whole. Add to the economic melt down and political crisis the result is the country is practically a disaster zone. This has led to various NGOs converging in the country offering food assistance in the countryside and cities alike.

At the Harare Lemba Synagogue with help we launched the emergency food program, a program that offers food assistance to needy families in the congregation. This program cannot go on forever : like somebody said It's best to teach people to catch fish than to always give them fish. The communal areas in rural Zimbabwe have enough land to grow food to sufficiently cater for people's food needs and more. So land is not the problem, but rather lack of infrastructure development that can make it possible for the villagers to grow food throughout the whole year. As I explained above Zimbabwe has been experiencing frequent droughts and erratic rainfall patterns which makes it nigh impossible to grow food while depending on rainfall alone. Also over the years the droughts led to the decimation of the village herd of cattle. Cattle is a priceless asset: they are used as draught power when tilling the land, without them the villagers cannot till enough land to grow enough food for their consumption requirements. Most of them now depend on zero tillage , that is digging holes and planting on untilled pieces of land.

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So the village irrigation scheme was created to provide irrigation infrastructure to Zvakavapano village in Buhera. This Lemba village was picked up for several reasons most important being there was already some infrastructure development in form of a borehole, a pump and a diesel generator. A survey and borehole capacity test done by a local irrigation engineering company confirmed that the borehole had more than enough water for our irrigation plans. Through Kulanu, well wishers raised funds to start drip installation on 1 hectare of land. We found an Israeli company Drip Tech that sells such irrigation equipment as well as recommend agents who install drip. The first step is to fence the land that will be put under drip, as we are writing this article fence is being installed on the land. The fence covers not just the 2 hectares targeted for initial drip irrigation installation, but a total of 6 hectares so as to cater for possible expansion in the future. Water tanks and pipes have also been installed

Once this system becomes operational which it will be in 2 weeks time, it will provide lasting solutions to both the Harare Lemba Synagogue and the village's food security problems. For the villagers who have land but cannot produce anything on it because of erratic rainfall, the irrigation scheme will be an insurance, a guarantee that if they grow crops they will harvest them. Such a guarantee did not exist before. Many times the villagers planted and weeded their crop only to watch their efforts go to naught as they watched their crops wither and dry up for lack of rain. Now they have somewhere where they will plant and will be guaranteed of a harvest.

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Having to depend on rainfall also meant that the village farms were "productive" only for 6 months during the rain season, during the dry season the villagers and their farms were idle, with no farming activities whatsoever taking place. From June to November they sat and waited for the next rain season. With nothing much to do in the village the young people left the village for city where they hoped to make a living. But in most cases for them the city is worse than the village. With unemployment rate above 90 percent in the country; the city has nothing to offer to the young Lemba who abandoned the villages of their origins hoping to make it big in the city. This is about to change, irrigation will mean the villagers will grow 3 crops a year, they will be busy throughout the year. For the first time in many years they will have enough food to eat. We are sure that bringing back productivity into village farms will stem the rural-urban migration. The youth will have work and a life in the village and will no longer need to lose themselves in the harsh, cold and inhospitable city life.

The irrigation project is a win-win situation for both the village and the HLS. The village has the land the water and will provide the labor. The funds to install the irrigation are being raised through HLS. Once the harvest comes in it will be shared by the village and the Harare Lemba Synagogue. The harvest from the farm will replace the emergency food program.

The farm will pay for its day to day running with those who work on it to produce crops getting a percentage of the produce as payment.

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Surplus produce will be shared on 50- 50 basis between the HLS and the village

The village irrigation project is just a pilot project, we hope every Lemba village will have a similar project. It is our solution to Lemba food problems and a way of empowering them to take charge of their lives.



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Notice about change of service times

We have rescheduled services to start at 10:30 on shabbat effective from last shabbat , Saturday October 22. The adjustment will enable us to finish the Shacharit service by noon. After lunch we will have the mincha services at 13:30 hours.

Any inconvenience the adjustment will cause is securely regretted

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HLS Learning Programs

As a young congregation the HLS still has to learn a lot about Rabbinical Judaism. As a people who have been isolated from mainstream Judaism and have only started to come back with the start of HLS, we have a lot of catching up to do: We have to make learning an integral part of our lives and of HLS: In the previous years we studied with Teachers from the USA, France and Israel, teachers brought in to teach us by Kulanu; We had the Bergs, the Feinbergs, Guershon , Sarah Eisen , Keith and Nili Flaks. We are still connected to all these teachers: for example the Feinbergs record the trope for the weekly parsha and a group of people who are learning to be baal Koreh/Torah readers can practice to chant Torah. Rav Keith still posts lessons to us via email, we have songs that Sarah Eisen recorded before she left for the USA.

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We also have teachers who teach us via Skype like Abe Reichman and Jevin Eagle. Since because of equipment and logistical constraints we cannot study together on Skype as a big group; we have arranged it so that Modreck learns with the teachers on Skype then he in turn teaches a class on Tuesdays and Thursdays; We also have opened a WhatsApp learning group and to date the learning group has 20 people

Our congregation is growing to date we have a total of 75 member who are registered with the congregation with an average attend for services of 45 people. Since May this year we have a total of 15 new members, members who have had no chance to learn with the previous teachers , so they had to start learning from scratch; we started teaching them to read Hebrew using the Hebrew book sourced for us by Elaine and Irwin Berg from NJOP/ The National Jewish Outreach Program: We have made copies for every student so that they take them to learn at home :Now we are teaching them liturgy and holidays so that they catch up with the old members : In December during the school holidays we will have another class for the children

We would like to thank all our teachers past and present May Hashem bless your for your generocity;

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Living Halacha

Lemba Kashrut about receiving meat from non Lemba neighbors after doing schita for them.

For hundreds of years the Lemba have been living alongside their non Lemba neighbors and friends. With time the different groups learnt to accept and be tolerant towards each other. The Lemba even helped their non Lemba friends to till their lands since the Lemba kept large herds of cattle and cattle are used to draw ploughs. In turn the non Lemba helped the Lemba harvest and weed their fields. Because of the amicable relationship that exists between us and our non Lemba friends: when the former want to slaughter their livestock they call a Lemba shochet to do the slaughtering. There are several reasons why they call a Lemba Shochet to slaughter their animals. living along side the Lemba for hundreds of years has resulted in some of them adopting some Lemba customs, they believe the Lemba way of slaughtering animals is the best health wise. Some of them slaughter animals so they can sell the meat and getting a Lemba Shochet to slaughter is a way of making sure that their Lemba neighbors will also buy the meat.

Usually after slaughtering an animal a shochet is given some meat as payment. However there were several Halachic questions that arose from this custom of getting meat as payment for slaughtering non Lemba Livestock. One particular incident led to a very memorable Halachic discourse during an LCA annual general meeting at Mapakomhere in January of 2014. A Lemba Shochet had slaughtered a cow for his non Lemba Neighbor. However the Lemba shochet didn't carry his meat immediately because it was too heavy for him. Instead

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he went back home to get a wheelbarrow so he could come fetch his meat. Meanwhile another non Lemba who resides in the same village had a sick ox that died naturally during the night and he didn't burn or bury the carcass as is custom in such situations. Instead they skinned the animal and shared the meat with his neighbors. The non Lemba who had his ox slaughtered by a Lemba also got a portion from the non kosher meat and the Slaughtered meat and the treif meat got mixed together before the shochet came to collect his share. When the Lemba shochet came to collect his share he didn't know the meat from the ox he slaughtered had gotten mixed with the meat from the ox that died naturally. So when the incident came to light it led to the great halachic debate led by Dr. Rabson Wuriga in January 2014 at an LCA annual general conference. A lot of Lemba elders had converged at Mapakomhere from different districts. In the end the elders laid down rules about accepting meat portions from our non Lemba neighbors after we slaughter for them. Below are a list of rules and guidelines that came from the discussion

- a) A shochet should carry his portion immediately after slaughtering , he can not leave his portion at a non Lemba's home and come back later to collect his portion, since there will be no way of knowing if the meat had gotten mixed with non kosher meat and other substances
- b) Other Lemba who want to buy meat slaughtered by a Lemba shochet must come to buy the meat on the spot before the meat gets carried into the non Lemba's home. There must always be a Lemba present to observe the selling process to make sure that no non Lemba knives and axes are used. If at any point the meat is left unmonitored by a Lemba man the meat becomes unclean for the Lemba

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- c) Lemba man must avoid any Jerky from non Lemba whether the animals was slaughtered by a Lemba or not , because there is really no way of telling whether it's the same meat on not. Also there is no way of telling where the meat was stored and how it was dried, so anything that goes into a non Lemba's home becomes unclean for the Lemba.

This incident and discussion reminds me of what happened in my own home village in Buhera. A Lemba man's cow was struck by lightning while grazing in the pasture. The Lemba man maybe because the loss of the cow was too much for him ended up slitting the throat of the already dead cow planning to sell the meat to his fellow villagers; Some unlucky villagers bought the meat before some villagers who had seen the dead cow before the owner "schitered" it told the other villagers that the meat was from an unslaughtered cow; In the end the unscrupulous Lemba man was lashed at the village head's court and he was fined a cow and the villagers who had eaten the meat went for a cleansing ceremony at the village priest's house

As a result of this incident the following laws were passed

- a) Any animal that is supposed to be consumed by Lemba public must be slaughtered in the presence of 5 or more people
- b) A group of official village shochets were elected to slaughter animals for the villagers
- c) The village headman had to give his approval before any meat is sold to the public

These halachic rulings and the incidents that led to the laying down of the rulings are worth noting since we can be confronted by the same problems in our respective communities
