

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

August 2018

Av/Elul 5778

SHABBAT TIMES

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

10 & 11 August – 30 Av

🕒 Re'eh

🕒 5:27 – 🕒 6:18

17 & 18 August – 7 Elul

🕒 Shoftim

🕒 5:31 – 🕒 6:21

24 & 25 August – 14 Elul

🕒 Ki Teitzei

🕒 5:34 – 🕒 6:24

31 August & 1 September – 21 Elul

🕒 Ki Tavo

🕒 5:37 – 🕒 6:27

7 & 8 September – 28 Elul

🕒 Nitzavim

🕒 5:30 – 🕒 6:29

RABBI'S MESSAGE

It was the Balkans War all over again, with both Serbia and Croatia facing their adversaries.

In London, Kevin Anderson was fighting Novak Djokovic in the Wimbeldon Men's Singles. Meanwhile, in Moscow, Croatia was facing France in the Soccer World Cup Final at Luzhniki Stadium.

And at Oxford Shul, I was convinced, we would be battling for a minyan.

Not only did these two concurrent great sporting

events compete for sport fans' attention around the world, both actually clashed with the prescribed time for Mincha & Maariv.

As I crossed the road from home to the Shul, I had the sense that I was simply wasting my time even trying to arrange an evening service. What chance was there that we could get close to 10 men to Synagogue on such a night? Clearly I had to go... I am the rabbi. But, would anyone else?

A couple of years ago, I visited Pittsburgh for our son Chaim's wedding. Pittsburghers are staunch supporters and followers of their local team, the Steelers. In Chaim's new family's Shul, Mincha is held early afternoon and Maariv late in the evening on days when those matches are held. Clearly they feel that the afternoon and evening services cannot fairly compete vs an NFL fixture involving their favourite team.

Well, we had not rescheduled our services. And now... To the handful of men who had gathered in the shul's garden I

quipped that the odds of a quorum at Oxford were about the same as Croatia going home with the coveted FIFA World Cup Trophy.

How wrong my prediction! One by one, the worshippers trickled in. A phone call scored me one more man, whom I managed to tear away from the final moments of the tennis. Final score: a minyan with one reserve!

All of you know, by now, how hard I have been fighting (and mostly winning) for Oxford's minyanim to continue uninterrupted. I may have overused/abused this column to achieve this agenda. And I had promised myself that I would stop as most of you are no doubt tired of this message.

But this tale I had to share.

We all know the end of the story. France won 4-2 in Russia; much to South Africans' chagrin, Djokovic beat Anderson.

At Oxford, the real winning team were the 11 men who made Mincha and Maariv.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I am beyond embarrassed to admit publicly that I missed my grandsons birthday. (May he have a beautiful blessed year ahead!)

Notice that I use the word missed and not forgot. I have a list of everyone's birthdays precisely so that I shouldn't miss any. And I promise I know the date of his and all the birthdays.

So let me explain what happened. I know that Meir Chaim is born a little before Yom Tov... And, I haven't processed that actually now is a little before Yom Tov.

Which brings me to another public admission... I have not started thinking about Yom tov.

Thinking about Yom tov doesn't mean only making plans for food, and clothes but also trying to do a stock taking of the year that was and making plans and prayers and hopes for the year ahead.

Probably that is why it is customary to begin wishing each other a good year right after the 15th of Av, 6 weeks before Rosh Hashanah. This way we won't be taken by surprise when it comes. We will have time to prepare, physically and spiritually.

May everyone be blessed with a year of goodness and happiness and health.

Wishing you a good month.

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

KING IN THE SUBWAY

by Tzvi Freeman (chabad.org)

Virtuoso Joshua Bell played his 3.5 million dollar Stradivarius in a subway station in Washington D.C. on a cold January morning and over a thousand people walked right by. Gene Weingarten of the Washington Post put him up to it, and Weingarten won a Pulitzer prize for his article.

As for Bell, he got a cold bucket of water on his head. Only two kinds of people stopped to listen: Seven adults and every last kid. Except the kids got pulled away by their mothers. The seven adults got to go to heaven and back. Acoustics in a subway station are fantastic. And hey, if someone told you that you could have a private concert from America's greatest violinist, for free, just stand right there in front of him, would you turn that down?

Three days before, you would have had to pay \$100 for a decent seat in a packed Boston Symphony Hall to hear Joshua Bell. Now you could have it for free. I mean, we're talking about D.C., saturated with think tank brains, foreign policy advisors and all those other sorts who would raise their noses to anyone that can't tell a viola from a violin. So why did everybody walk by?

Simple. It's for one of two reasons: Either they don't have the music playing inside them. Or because they are not children.

I read the story in the Washington Post, but it wasn't until the next morning I realized it's meaning. The lights flashed, the heavens opened and it hit me. It's a parable. It's the king in the subway parable.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi wanted to explain some Kabbalah about this time of year. Yom Kippur is not a time, it's a season. Something special is happening then, and we farmers of the cosmic soil need to be in tune with that rhythm. Specifically, there are 13 intense beams of light that shine into that world, "thirteen measures of compassion," capable of healing anything and anyone. You want to be in a state to receive and absorb that light. You want to be a step above the world, not working, not eating, in a special place doing special things.

But hold on, says R. Schneur Zalman, those 13 beams don't start shining on Yom Kippur. They don't even start on Rosh Hashanah. They're shining for an entire month before Rosh Hashanah, for the entirety of the month we call Elul. If so, how can we go to work, how can we eat? How can we spend these days as though they were just another day of the week?

So he tells us the story of the king in the field. If he were telling it today, he would talk about the king in the subway station. No, not Elvis. Maybe Joshua Bell.

A parable of a king who is returning to his capital city and all the people of the city

come out to greet the king in the field. He receives each one with a friendly countenance and greets all of them with a smile. Then, once he returns to his palace, only the most special individuals can come to see him, and only with permission.

The palace is Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. For those concerts, you need to buy tickets. I don't mean the ones for a seat in your synagogue. I mean, you have to get yourself into a certain state of mind, you've got to be there, cerebrally and spiritually and then you will hear the music. It happens when you're with other Jews and the shofar is blowing, or you are fasting and beating your chest on a Day of At Onement.

But in Elul, the king is in the field. You find him in that place you go inside yourself to break the coarse soil of your soul, to plow there furrows, to plant and nurture seeds of wisdom and beautiful deeds.

If the king is in the field, why aren't the people of the field coming to greet him? Hey, you dumb farmers! How much would you pay to have a personal audience with the king? Why are only the people of the city coming to see him?

Simple. The people in the field are preoccupied with their work. Because the field is a subway station, a place you go to get sucked off in a metal canister to your place of productive labor each day. You've got appointments to make, schedules to keep.

And anyways, the people of the field don't know who the king is that they should recognize him. They didn't buy a ticket. There are no plush seats. Nobody is decked out in Yom Tov clothes and nobody is applauding. So it couldn't be the king. What is a king, after all, but his robes, pomp, splendor and masses exclaiming ahhh and oohh? Only the people of the city, meaning those who see past the pomp and the robes, those who get what a king really is, they can notice him there in the subway. Because they have a touch of the king inside them.

And also, they are not children.

Joshua Bell wanted to know if he would be recognized for who he is, without the concert hall. G-d, it seems, has the same issue.

John Picarello heard the king. He got it. He heard and he froze in his tracks. Something carried him into position just past the shoeshine stand. Without really making a conscious decision, he delayed the subway ride to work to take a ride to heaven and back.

From Weingarten himself:

When Picarello was growing up in New York, he studied violin seriously, intending to be a concert musician. But he gave it up at 18, when he decided he'd never be good enough to make it pay. Life does that to you sometimes. Sometimes, you have to do the prudent thing. So he went into another line of work. He's a

supervisor at the U.S. Postal Service. Doesn't play the violin much, anymore.

When he left, Picarello says, "I humbly threw in \$5." It was humble: You can actually see that on the video. Picarello walks up, barely looking at Bell, and tosses in the money. Then, as if embarrassed, he quickly walks away from the man he once wanted to be.

Does he have regrets about how things worked out?

The postal supervisor considers this.

"No. If you love something but choose not to do it professionally, it's not a waste. Because, you know, you still have it. You have it forever."

So now I have to think: Do I have it forever? Because if I don't, how will I recognize the King awaiting me in my confused inner subway station?

Because, if not, there's only one solution left. I'll have to be a child.

SERVICE TIMES

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays 8:00

09/09 (Selichot): 7:45

Monday to Friday 7:15

03/09 & 06/09 (Selichot): 6:45

04/09 & 05/09 (Selichot): 7:00

Shabbat & Festivals 9:00

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday 5:30

Friday 5:30

Shabbat 5:15

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

- Theo Rutstein on his twin grandson's barmitzvah.
- Avril Wolpert on her grandson's barmitzvah.
- Stanley & Lucille Kaplan on their grandson's barmitzvah.

BIRTHS

- Michael & Lee Asefovitz on the birth of a granddaughter.

MARRIAGES

- Wayne Nates on his marriage to Debbie Levin.
- Doris Samson, on the marriage of her granddaughter, Tova Lubinsky to Dan Segal.

BIRTHDAYS

- Maisie Ehrlich on her 93rd birthday on the 14th August.

BEREAVEMENTS

We wish long life to

- Lewis Duchon on the death of his mother, Bessie Duchon.
- Doreen Kapeluschnik on the death of her sister, Bella Kotzin.

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

