

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

20 North Avenue, Riviera

✉ P.O. Box 87406, Houghton, 2041

☎ 011-646-6020 📠 086-580-2624

🌐 www.oxfordshul.com 📧 info@oxfordshul.com

📘 facebook.com/oxfordshul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

August 2020

Av 5780

SHABBAT TIMES

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

7 & 8 August – 18 Av

🔊 Eikev

🕯 5:27 – 🕯 6:17

14 & 15 August – 25 Av

🔊 Re'eh

🕯 5:30 – 🕯 6:20

21 & 22 August – 2 Elul

🔊 Shoftim

🕯 5:33 – 🕯 6:23

28 & 29 August – 9 Elul

🔊 Ki Teitzei

🕯 5:36 – 🕯 6:26

4 & 5 September – 16 Elul

🔊 Ki Tavo

🕯 5:39 – 🕯 6:29

RABBI'S MESSAGE

A couple of days ago I snuck into the main shul for a quick, very lonely, Mincha. It had been months and it felt like being back with an old friend. The red curtain on the Holy Ark looked absolutely resplendent. It was very quiet... Was my mind playing tricks? From behind the curtain I seemed to hear a voice, whispering the question that is on everyone's lips and that I must have heard hundreds of times in the last few weeks, "are you guys going to be here on the High Holidays?"

The date was 15 Av—I remember this because this is a mini-festival, on which we omit the Tachanun prayer and I

recall the slightly briefer service. This means six weeks to go to Rosh Hashanah. Hence the question was quite topical and not merely theoretical. What would I answer the whispering voice?

Our current year is 5780, or ש"פ in Hebrew characters. For months already many have been quoting the verse from Psalm 81, "שפת לא ידעתי אשמע." Literally the word שפת means a tongue and the direct meaning of this verse is "I will hear a language I do not know." But in the context of the uncertainty enveloping the word at present, it has been interpreted to mean, "In the year שפת (=תשפ"ו or 5780) I will hear, 'I do not know.'"

Indeed, this has been a year with many questions and few answers. Why is this all happening? Will we be okay? Will we remain healthy? Will we remain sane? Have we peaked yet? Have we reached the long awaited plateau? Are we looking at recovery? When will there be a vaccine? Will there be a cure? Can one be re-infected after having been ill? When will this end? Can anyone explain Hashem's plan in all this? When will alcohol and tobacco sales be permitted? When are we moving to Stage 2? Are schools going to re-open? When will our interprovincial and international borders open?

The answer, in each case, is a shrug, a look portraying despair and the words, "I do not know."

And, one more question, also in the above category, "When will shuls re-open? Will be able to be at Oxford over Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?"

But this week, rather than a sad countenance (and perhaps a tear) I was able to look back at the Holy Ark with an optimistic smile. "I hope so," I wanted to respond (but who speaks to curtains?), "things are really looking up and should the numbers continue to look promising, we hope to all be sitting here, listening to the Shofar, the sounds of prayer and the words of inspiration. It is too early for a definite answer, but we are going to beg Hashem that we are allowed to be here on those very special days."

From 15 Av it is appropriate to begin wishing one another "לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו", that we should be inscribed and sealed for a good year. This year we are all going to add another common greeting for this season, "תכלה שנה וקללותיה, תחל שנה וברכותיה" may the year and its curses come to an end and may the new year and its blessings begin.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

Yesterday we attended a wedding. The first one in a very long time. We did not need to get dressed up and we did not even need to leave our house. We all sat around the computer and watched the chupah from our own home.

This evoked so many emotions which I would like to share with you.

Both the chosson and kallah and their respective families, are dear friends. It was a wedding we would have loved to dance at. I would have loved to give the bride a big hug. Even the 50 people who were there had to keep their "social distance." Yet the event was incredibly beautiful. We laughed and cried and davened and rejoiced as we watched this couple begin their new lives together. While it was a stark reminder of the crazy time we are living through it was also a strong reminder of the nation we are: we never give up; we find a plan; we find a way to rejoice and be happy despite the circumstances; we find a way to continue.

I am sure you join me in the prayer that this young couple should merit to build a beautiful home together and no doubt you are saying a loud Amen to the final blessing they were given under the chupah, "מדרה ישמע..."—May we quickly hear, once again, the sounds of weddings in the streets and halls and shuls.

This is the time we begin to wish each other Ketiva Vachatima Tova. Have a good month.

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

How To Avoid Exploding In Elul

*by Tzvi Freeman
(chabad.org)*

On the ugly necessity of growing up.

It's Elul, and I've begun molting. That's a seasonal process whereby critters shed their protective outer-layers to form new, more expansive ones. Something like trading in for this year's new model. So I also shed my exoskeleton of old habits and personality traits as I form a new self for the coming year. I know, it sounds scary, but I've been doing it for years now and it works fine for me, thank you.

But then I was thinking, hey, this is a lot of work. It renders me super-vulnerable. It expends energy and accelerates entropy. In fact, I just saw a report that says that molting is like ripping out your lungs. It seems bugs are incapable of breathing for the 45 minutes or so that it takes to replace that old shell.

So, I thought, what if I just skip this year and keep my old persona and comfy shell? Who says you can't gain the wisdom of life while staying consistent in your habits?

That's when the termite inspector came by. While he was strolling about, inspecting the capsules anchored in the ground around the perimeter of our house, I asked him to

describe just how this bait kills off a colony. After all, it's on my property. What if the neighbor's dog eats some of it? What if one of my kids finds some?

No problem, he said. It only affects bugs, and maybe other critters that molt their shells.

That got my ears perked. I needed to know: What exactly does this bait do to molters?

Turns out that termites, like most bugs, molt many times in a single lifetime. (Hey, some bugs do it once every 24 hours!) When they molt, they can even replace broken limbs and other apparatus. At certain points, they even get to shift their role and become big, tough guards or flying swarmers, or reproducers.

But the poison in this bait inhibits the production of chitin, a substance much like the keratin that your fingernails are made of. No chitin, no molting.

So what happens to a termite that doesn't molt?

"Well," answered the termite guy, "It doesn't stop growing. But there's no room for it to grow."

"So it just blows up?"

"Right. Explodes. Real ugly."

"All of them?"

"One by one."

The apparition of my neighbor's cat theoretically exploding all over my daffodils after imbuing a whiff of termite bait suddenly shook my conscience. Tell me this can't be so. I have enough nightmares of insect cousins returning for vengeance after having destroyed the hornet metropolis-nest in the backyard last month.

So I searched for some real laboratory research on the web. But it seems nobody has actually observed a single termite under the influence of noviflumuron, the active ingredient in this anti-termite mix. Nobody's really interested in individual termites. The colony is annihilated within a year and that's all that matters.

What I did read, however, was enough to shake me up a little:

...The active ingredient, noviflumuron, gets shared within the colony and prevents termites from maturing through molting.

...The insect growth regulator noviflumuron controls subterranean termite colonies by preventing juveniles from developing into adults after they ingest the product.

...It interrupts the termites' necessary ability to molt, which means they are unable to grow and, therefore, die.

Let me summarize:

If I don't molt, I don't mature.

If I don't mature, I stay forever a juvenile.

Actually, I won't stay forever a juvenile, because not growing is, well, let's just say the opposite of life—no matter how much wisdom you think you've gained.

The point is, that was just what I needed to hear. There's no way I'm going to stop growing. Every day you learn something new, gain new insight or wisdom. But there's this shell, this self made of habits and well, just my old, comfy modality of being. Gain all the wisdom you can, but if you don't shed your old exoskeleton-habits for a new set, what good could come of that wisdom?

Like Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah says in the Mishnah:

Someone whose wisdom is greater than his deeds, what's he like? A tree with lots of branches and few roots, ready to be uprooted and tossed on its face by the first wind.

But someone whose deeds outnumber his wisdom? He's a tree with a lesser branch-to-root ratio. Let all the winds in the world come and blow—this guy's not budging. [Green, resilient, serene, fruitful... read the rest in Avot 3:17.]

Roots, shells—different metaphors, same idea. Right now, I'm working on a new

shell-root-habit of studying halachah with a friend for half an hour every morning before breakfast.

I've also started giving a dollar to tzedakah twice a day on a new app built for that purpose.

Then there's my new habit of smiling to people when I see them. Totally against the grain. Yes! Go for it, Freeman!

And I switched the kind of socks I wear. Just for the sake of changing habits.

If I work hard at it, I figure maybe I can grow some antennae, or a proboscis. Well, at least I could change my role in the colony.

As to the unsavory question of what happens to individual termites if they never change that shell—better not to think about it. I'll continue molting, thank you.

So what's your new shell all about? Share with us and we'll share with you.

SERVICE TIMES

For our safety, all Shul services are currently suspended. We hope and pray for their resumption soon.

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday & Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
<i>20/08 & 21/08 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00</i>	
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Friday	5:30
from 30/08	5:45
Shabbat	5:15
from 05/09	5:30

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Clive & Michele Wolpert on the birth of a great grandson in London.

BATMITZVAH

- Shmuelly & Lisa Nudelman and Blima Nudelman on the Batmitzvah of their daughter and granddaughter, Shayna.

MARRIAGES

- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the marriage of their granddaughter Sara Malka Fox to Mendy Shishler on 6th August

- Doris Samson on the marriage of her grandson Yonason to Shifra Lieberman in Gateshead, England on 19th August.

BIRTHDAYS

- Stan Yankelson on the occasion of his 75th birthday on the 11th August.
- Maisie Ehrlich on the occasion of her 95th birthday on the 14th August.
- Avril Wolpert on the occasion of her 75th birthday on the 16th August.
- Myrna Kaplan on the occasion of her 91st birthday on the 17th August.
- Raymond Isakow on the occasion of his 65th birthday on the 27th August.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Robert Soicher
- Sharon Margo

**BEREAVEMENTS**

We wish long life to

- Frank Wilks, Brett Wilks & Tarryn Sacher on the death of their mother-in-law and grandmother, Phyllis Wulfsohn.
- Gary, Ivan & Martin Epstein and Lee Epstein on the death of their father and husband, Albert.
- Eddie Pokroy on the death of his sister, Sandra Sher.
- Jill Chipkin on the death of her husband, Bernard.

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

**WE BEGIN BLOWING SHOFAR ON ROSH CHODESH ELUL
FRIDAY 21 AUGUST**

