

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 2022

Av 5782

SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting

🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)
For service times see page 2

12 & 13 August – 16 Av

🕒 Va'etchanan (Shabbat Nachamu)

🕒 5:29 – 🕒 6:19

19 & 20 August – 23 Av

🕒 Eikev

🕒 5:32 – 🕒 6:22

26 & 27 August – 30 Av

🕒 Re'eh

🕒 5:35 – 🕒 6:25

2 & 3 September – 7 Elul

🕒 Shoftim

🕒 5:38 – 🕒 6:28

9 & 10 September – 14 Elul

🕒 Ki Tetze

🕒 5:40 – 🕒 6:30

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Once again we sat on the floor and wept for the destruction of the Holy Temple, Jerusalem and our 2000-year exile. We have been doing this for two millennia, giving rise to the legend about Napoleon Bonaparte on Tisha B'Av in Paris. Walking past a shul, the Emperor asked why the Jews were weeping and was told it was over the loss of their Temple. When he found out that the calamity had taken place 1600 years earlier, he is reported to have exclaimed, "if they are still crying about it all those years later, they will get it back one day!"

Jacob mourned for decades over the loss of his son Joseph. All attempts by his close ones to console him were to no avail, as he could not be comforted. The Sages explain that it is by Divine decree that the raw pain of a bereavement recedes with time. Of course, as we know, Joseph was not dead, but rather a slave, then a prisoner in and eventually the viceroy of Egypt. The Divine decree is for mourners to receive solace over their dead, not for the living.

We still mourn in 2022 because the Holy Temple and all that it stands for is not dead. It is very much living in our minds, as we pray for its rebuilding and the end of exile, three times every single day. We study, discuss and imagine the world as it will be in this redemptive state. We long for a world of global peace, good health and prosperity known as the Messianic Age. So the Temple is very much alive to us. How can we stop lamenting?

The Haftarah on the Shabbat immediately following Tisha B'Av begins with the words "Nachamu, Nachamu—Comfort, comfort My People." This is followed by six more

selections, all from the prophecies of Isaiah, encouraging the Jewish Nation to be consoled from the pain of exile. How can we be expected to find consolation from a pain so raw?

The answer lies in the name of the current month. Usually referred to as Av, its full name is actually Menachem Av. This translates as "The Father comforts." When a parent holds his child tight and says, "Everything is going to be alright" there is immediate relief from the pains and the anxiety that are crippling his offspring. Nothing has changed and the light has not suddenly appeared at the end of the tunnel, but such is the power of a parental embrace.

In this month and the next, during the so-called Seven Weeks of Consolation, Hashem opens His arms in a huge, holy and powerful hug. We need to run towards Him and allow his Arms to surround us and shelter us. We may still be pained and scared but with our faith we know that everything is going to be alright.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

Today, I was invited again to speak to the Grade 6 girls. They are the oldest class in the primary school and will be coming to join the high school where I teach in a few months, PG. It always surprises me how grown up they are in primary school and how little they are when they arrive in high school.

There in primary school they are the big shots, the monitors, the teachers' helpers. The little children look up at them in awe.

Then they arrive in high school. There they are the babies of the school. They are too scared even to go to the office alone to get a Panado. They are petrified to come late or to wear incorrect uniform. They look up at the matrics in awe.

I smile about this every year. But I realise that we all live our lives like this too. Depending on who and what is around us we too feel big or small, accomplished or ordinary, capable or useless. It is so important for us to surround ourselves with the right people and to frequent the right places so that we can be our very best.

In Pirkei Avot we are instructed to choose good friends, find good mentors and frequent good places like shuls and houses of learning. This will help us achieve our very best.

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
--------	------

DVAR TORAH
**Seven Degrees of
Consolation**

(MeaningfulLife.com)

The Torah compares the bond between G-d and Israel to the marriage relationship between man and wife. Thus, when we violated the commandments of the Torah, the prophets admonished us as a wayward wife who has betrayed her husband, and the resultant galut--the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and our banishment into exile—is referred to as a period of estrangement and "separation" in the marriage. In the same vein, the prophets speak of the messianic redemption as the restoration of the relationship and the forging of a renewed, even deeper bond of love between the bride Israel and her Supernal Groom.

In the innermost chamber of the Holy Temple, the "Holy of Holies," stood a golden ark, containing the "Tablets of Testimony" on which G-d had inscribed the Ten Commandments, as well as the original Torah scroll written by Moses. Topping the Ark were the keruvim, two winged figures, one male and one female, hammered out of a block of pure gold. The keruvim represented the relationship between G-d and His people: the Talmud tells us that when the people of Israel rebelled against the will of the Almighty, the keruvim would turn away from each other; when Israel was faithful to her G-d, they would face each other; times in which the love and goodwill between G-d and His bride were at their peak were reflected in the keruvim embrace "as a man cleaves to his wife" (Talmud, Bava Batra 99a; Yoma 54a).

The Talmud relates that when the enemies of Israel invaded the Temple, they entered into the Holy of Holies, a place so sacred that entry into it was permitted only to a single individual, the High Priest, and only on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year. There they saw the keruvim embracing each other. They dragged them out of the Temple and into the streets, mocking and vulgarizing their sacred significance.

The Paradox

In our prayers we remind ourselves that "Because of our sins, we were exiled from our land... and we are no longer able to ascend and show ourselves and bow before You... in Your chosen home, in the great and holy house upon which Your Name is called."

For more than eight centuries (the First Temple stood 410 years, the Second Temple, 420), G-d dwelled in a physical edifice on a Jerusalem mountaintop, granting us a tactual experience of His presence in our lives. But we proved unworthy of such closeness and intimacy with the divine. The Holy Temple was taken from us, and we were cast into galut--a state of existence in which the divine face is hidden and G-ds love and concern for us is concealed—so that the void in our lives should impel us to repent our ways and repair the damage to our marriage inflicted by our misdeeds.

But if galut is a time of estrangement between G-d and Israel—asks the Lubavitcher Rebbe—why were the keruvim embracing each other at the time of the Temple's destruction? Wouldn't the destruction of the Holy Temple mark a nadir in our relationship with the Almighty? What greater paradox can there be: the Divine Groom is destroying His marital home, allowing His nuptial chamber to be violated and His bride to be carried off by strangers, while the barometer of their marriage indicates the ultimate in intimacy and union!

Three and Seven

Following the reading of the weekly Torah portion each Shabbat, a selection from the Prophets, called the haftarah, is read in the synagogue. Usually, the content of the haftarah corresponds to the weeks Torah reading. However, there are weeks when the haftarah instead reflects events connected with the time of the year. Such is the case during the last ten weeks of the year, when ten special haftarot--called the "Three of Rebuke" and the "Seven of Consolation"--are read.

The "Three of Rebuke" are read in conjunction with the "Three Weeks" from Tammuz 17 to Av 9,

during which we mourn the destruction of the Temple and the onset of our galut.

On the 17th of Tammuz in the year 3829 from creation (69 ce), the walls of Jerusalem were breached by the besieging armies of Rome. After three weeks of fighting, during which the Romans advanced with great difficulty through the city, they succeeded in breaking into the Temple; on Av 9 they set it aflame. The 9th of Av is also the date of the First Temple's destruction, by the Babylonians, in the year 3339 (423 bce). Tammuz 17 and Av 9 are observed as fast days, and the three weeks between them—referred to by the prophet as "between the strictures"—as a time of mourning. In this period, the haftarah readings consist of selections from the Prophets (Jeremiah 1:2-2:3; *ibid.* 2:4-2:28 and 3:4; and Isaiah 1:1-27) in which the prophet rebukes Israel for her crimes and iniquities and her betrayal of her covenant with G-d.

The "Three of Rebuke" are followed by "Seven of Consolation." For seven weeks, beginning with the Shabbat after the Ninth of Av (Tishah B'Av), the haftarah readings consist of prophecies describing G-d's consolation of His people and the rehabilitation of their relationship (Isaiah 40:1-26; 49:14-51:3; 54:11-55:5; 51:12-52:12; 54:1-10; 60:1-22; and 61:10-63:9). Thus we reexperience each year the process of rebuke and condolence, destruction and rebuilding, estrangement and reunion.

But why, specifically, a ten-week process? And what is the significance of its division into three phases of withdrawal and seven degrees of reconciliation? Chassidic sage Rabbi Hillel of Paritch explains that the "Three of Rebuke" and the "Seven of Consolation" correspond to the ten attributes of the soul, which are likewise divided into sets of three and seven: the soul of man possesses three basic intellectual faculties (conceptualization, comprehension, and application), and seven basic emotional drives (love, awe, harmony, ambition, devotion, bonding, and receptiveness). For it is the interrelation between mind and heart that enables us to understand the

true nature of the "estrangement" of galut.

Mind and Heart

The mind, by nature and necessity, is aloof and detached. To apprehend a concept it must assume an objective distance, divesting itself of all involvement with or affinity to its subject and adopting a reserved, even callous disinterest toward the studied entity. Only then can its analysis and comprehension be exact and complete.

The heart, on the other hand, is involved, attached, gloriously subjective. The heart relates to the object of its affections, bridging distances, surmounting the barriers between self and other.

Yet true and enduring attachments are born only out of understanding. Feelings which are based on nothing more than impulse or instantaneous attraction are ultimately as shallow as they are intense. It is those emotions that are conceived in the womb of the mind which possess depth and continuity; it is the love that is founded upon an understanding and appreciation of the beloved that can transcend the fluctuations of feeling, the letdowns, the lethargy, and the many other pitfalls of time and change.

So the seemingly cold and distant mind is, in truth, the source and essence of any meaningful relationship. The detachment associated with rational examination actually lies at the heart of our emotive capacity to bond with others.

G-d's "Mind"

"From my own flesh, I perceive G-d," says the verse. Man is a metaphor of the divine: by examining our own physiological and psychological makeup, we learn much about the divine reality and the manner in which G-d chooses to relate to His creations.

Thus the mind-heart paradox—the manner in which mental detachment is the essence and foundation of true emotional attachment—provides us with a model for the paradox of galut.

G-d's relationship with us also includes both "intellectual" and "emotional" elements. At times, we sense what appear to be signs of detachment and disinvolvement on His part. G-d seems to have shifted the focus of His attention from our lives, abandoning us to the whims of "chance" and "fate." Our existence seems bereft of all direction and purpose. G-d is "distancing" Himself from us, our lives apparently no longer worthy of His concern.

In truth, however, this divine "objectivity" carries the seeds of greater connection. It is a disengagement for the sake of a more enduring relationship, a withdrawal to create an even more meaningful closeness. Ostensibly, galut is a breakdown, a diminution of the bond between ourselves and G-d; in truth, it is the essence of a deeper identification with and commitment to each other.

G-d's hiding His face from us in galut is an act of love. Despite our painful incomprehension, it serves to deepen our attachment to Him. In the "Three of Rebuke," we experience abandonment, alienation and distance; but these give birth to the "Seven of Consolation."

Bereft of the outward expressions of our relationship with G-d, we are impelled to uncover its essence, the quintessential bond which transcends all physical and spiritual distance. Thus, it is only through the experience of galut that the deepest dimensions of our marriage are realized. Externally, the Three Weeks are a period of detachment and estrangement; in essence, they are the height of attachment and connection.

Thus the pagan armies entering the Holy of Holies found the keruvim in intimate embrace. Without, Israel was being vanquished and exiled, and the Holy Temple set ablaze. Externally the marriage was crumbling, the husband alienated and the wayward wife banished to a foreign land. But within the Holy of Holies—within the chamber which housed the essence of their marriage—the bond between G-d and His people was at the height of closeness and unity.

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- June Berger on the birth of a great grandson.
- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great grandson in Houston.

MARRIAGES

- Marion Rapp on the marriage of her grandson, Daniel Rapp to Mara Abrahamson

BIRTHDAYS

- Hilary Isakow on the occasion of her 65th birthday on the 28th August.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Rene Gamsu
- Madeline Fane
- Rose Oskowitz

**BEREAVEMENTS**

We wish long life to:

- Hazel Benard and to Lilian Benard on the death of their husband and grandfather, Sam.
- Estelle Levin on the death of her sister, Arlene Lazarow

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



PURCHASE A LEAF ON OUR “SIMCHA TREE”

to mark a happy event in your family
Cost of each leaf is R 360.00 - For details please contact the office

SPONSOR A BROCHA

at the Shul on the occasion of a personal or family Simcha, to commemorate a Yartzeit, birthday or anniversary.

For details and bookings contact the Shul office

