

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

✉ 20 North Avenue, Riviera, 2193

☎ 011-646-6020 📠 086-580-2624

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

📘 facebook.com/oxfordshul

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

August 2023

Av/Elul 5783

SHABBAT TIMES

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

11 & 12 August – 25 Av

🕒 Re'eh

🕒 5:28 – 🕒 6:19

18 & 19 August – 2 Elul

🕒 Shoftim

🕒 5:31 – 🕒 6:22

25 & 26 August – 9 Elul

🕒 Ki Teitzei

🕒 5:34 – 🕒 6:24

1 & 2 September – 16 Elul

🕒 Ki Tavo

🕒 5:37 – 🕒 6:27

RABBI'S MESSAGE

The golf course at Zimbali Estate in KZN is a place of serenity and magnificent scenic beauty. Small monkeys frolic along the pathways, while elegant cranes swoop gracefully over the water features to feed themselves. Absolute silence prevails, broken only by the sounds of the fauna and the waterfalls.

Once a year, South Africa's rabbis gather for a few days of learning, lectures, debating, banter and eating. This year's Chief Rabbi Harris Annual Conference, arranged by the current Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein, recently took place at the Capitol Hotel in Zimbali on Natal's North Coast. Besides the serious business of such a congress there is always free time scheduled for the purpose of informal chats

and for building personal and social connections. (Many of the foreign lecturers commented on the unity across the entire spectrum of the rabbinate, something apparently unheard of in other countries.)

RR&R (Rabbinic Rest & Recreation) consisted of a meander around the estate on golf carts provided by the hotel. One member of our foursome was recovering from recent knee surgery, ruling out any of the hikes, as appealing as they may have seemed. This is how we ended up on the pathways of the golf course, enjoying the peace and splendour, with nary a solitary golfer in sight.

Near the 6th hole, we noticed that a wire from the very short fence had fallen over, obstructing the pathway. I was at the wheel at the time, and zigzagged across the wire strewn over the paving. One of our group suggested we do a favour for the next cart to come down this same path. He quickly hopped off the cart, lifted the wire and its wooden post, replacing it where it belonged. This was a pure altruistic act of kindness, paying it forward for people we would never meet or know. However...

We continued driving slowly, taking in the sights and the sounds. As we reached the end of our charming drive, we realised that the only way

out and back to the hotel would be to retrace our steps and leave the golf course the same place we had entered. All the other exits seemed to lead us through areas for which we had not been granted boom access. So a U-turn it was, and back we were along the very same route.

At that point I had (reluctantly, as I was having fun) handed over the steering wheel to my kind fence-fixer path-clearer rabbinic colleague. As we neared the site of his kind mitzvah, our faces lit up with broad smiles, as it dawned on us all that the first and most immediate beneficiary of this act of thoughtfulness would be none other than the perpetrator himself.

In Ecclesiastes 11, King Solomon teaches us to "Send your bread forth upon the waters; for after many days you will find it." Rashi's comment on the verse reads, "Do goodness and kindness to a person about whom your heart tells you that you will never see him again... for days will yet come and you will receive your recompense." Seldom do we actually see the fulfilment of this powerful adage with our own eyes. But sometimes, just sometimes, put four rabbis in one golf cart and amazing things can happen.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

Emanuel came back!

A couple of months ago a homeless man moved into our street. Everyone seemed to care for him and provided him with blankets, jerseys, food and money. He had different people doing different things for him; my neighbour gave him hot water for tea every morning! He lived happily. He was well spoken and polite. The trouble, however, was that his possessions began to overflow the trolley he used, and the pavement was filled with his many shopping bags, cardboard boxes and various other things he chose from the dustbin. If you stopped to look, you could see mice and rats running around his things. His space became an eyesore and the neighbours got fed up. In a real covert operation, a bakkie arrived, and in a few short minutes, loaded up all his possessions and disappeared.

I have been so confused about my own reaction to this.

One part of me worries about Emanuel. On cold and rainy nights I often worry about him and how he will survive. The other part of me definitely does not want him living on my street.

One part of me was furious when I heard how he had been evicted and his belongings stolen. The other part of me was relieved that was no longer on my street.

The more I ponder over this the more I see how Emanuel just represents so many parts of our lives.

How often are our feelings hypocritical? We think a particular charity is worthy, but don't think we are the ones who need to be giving. We think shul should have a minyan every day; we don't think we have to come. We think measures should be taken to keep our environment clean; we don't think we should have to make any sacrifice for that. The list continues.

On shabbos morning when I went out, I saw Emanuel walking down the street again with his new trolley.

I am going to use Emanuel as a constant reminder to be a part of how I want the world around me to look.

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
**LONGING FOR MY
BELOVED**

*by Mendy Herson
(chabad.org)*

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are very powerful days; they have a special aura: We don't work, we spend lots of time at services, many people even dress in white — symbolizing purity, etc. On Yom Kippur, we don't eat; we're almost like angels, living in a spiritual cocoon.

But that's not normal life. We spend our days running around, juggling our responsibilities, businesses, families, hobbies, etc. We're just so human. Now we have these special holidays. How do we get from here to there? Practically speaking, can we turn on a dime — shifting from the mundane to the [spiritually] monumental? The answer is that we have a great segue, a transition period, which is critical to the meaningful High Holiday experience. It's called Elul.

I can hear some of you asking: "What's an Elul?" "How come I never heard of that?" Well, Elul is a month; and it's a real beauty. Here's the idea: The Jewish calendar has various periods of heightened spiritual sensitivity and awareness.

We can always connect with G-d; but some days are more propitious than others. Some days there's clearer reception.

Think of it this way: If I'm in a room, and I can't see, there may be two reasons: either my eyes are closed, or the light is off. Or, perhaps, both factors might be true; my eyes are closed and the light is off. We can use this as a metaphor for our own Divine awareness. Left to its own devices, the world is 'dark'; it seems shallow and disconnected. There's no G-dly 'light' to see.

So, we need two factors. First, I have to open my eyes. After all, it's common enough (at least superficially) to go through life with eyes shut to spiritual light. So I have to open myself up to the presence of the Divine within reality.

But, I can only appreciate holiness that's revealed in my orbit; I still need the light to be turned on. When G-d shines the light, and I open my eyes, the relationship flourishes.

Thankfully, G-d always emanates holiness for us to appreciate. But there are levels and gradations to that, too. On Shabbat, for example, G-d projects an otherworldly sense of Himself — if we can only manage to connect, to 'open our eyes,' to internalize it. Other Jewish Holidays are also 'holy moments' — rarefied

phases when we can achieve levels of connectedness that might be unavailable on a regular Tuesday.

Kabbalistic sources teach that Elul is a similar period of intense Divine revelation. This is G-d's gift to us, enabling us to properly approach the High Holidays.

But the question begs to be asked: The calendar's other holy moments all seem to be Shabbat or Festivals (Yom Tov). Those days — days when we don't work, when we're focused on the synagogue, the seder, the shofar etc. — they are the days of cosmic revelation. Why doesn't Elul have any holidays?

Why is Elul a normal month if the Divine projection is indeed so awesome?

Here's an answer: When you think about it, this itself (the 'normalcy' of the month) reveals its true power. When people are cocooned in spirituality, swathed in the beauty of a Jewish Festival, they are primed for a G-dly experience. G-dliness fits into the groove of the day. On the other hand, mundane life seems shut to G-dliness. Holiness doesn't fit very comfortably.

But G-d is infinite, without boundaries. We don't accept the idea that G-d can't reach us in our

normal lives. It must simply take a deeper, more potent revelation to reach us at that uninviting level.

Think about it: We measure a lamp's potency by how far it can project light. It takes more power to project illumination far from the source. The same applies to G-dliness. Revelation to those in meditation does not take as much 'potency' as revelation to those in a disconnected state.

G-d grants us this special boon because we need it; we're about to face the High Holidays. So G-d — mercifully — gives us a month of inspiration. We need our mundane lives transformed. We need to transcend material life's shallowness, rising up to connect with its latent sanctity.

So G-d comes to us, in our blinding vortex of physical life, to touch us, to inspire us. G-d gives us a little zetz in the kishkes (poke in the ribs), to wake us up — to recognize our own need for meaning, for holiness, for Him.

In order to appreciate the High Holidays, we have to step away from our own self-absorption. We have to recognize our limitations and yearn for connection with the Divine.

Elul is a time when G-d helps us to find that inner longing, selflessness and

holiness. But it takes a step from us; G-d prompts us, but we've got to take a step. The scriptural 'Song of Songs' is all a metaphor for this (two-way) yearning between G-d and us. One of the verses there (6:3) says it succinctly: "Ani l'dodi v'dodi lee" — I am to my Beloved (G-d) and my Beloved is to me.

Our tradition notes that these four Hebrew words form the acronym 'Elul,' because this is Elul's theme. Elul is the time to find that yearning within. That's why it's traditional to blow the shofar every day of Elul; the pristine call of the shofar reflects the soul's cry for meaning.

You can do it; now's the time. G-d helps you to find that inner love, especially this month. You've just got to take a step to greet your Beloved — do a mitzvah, attend a class, just take a step.

The month of Elul begins on Thursday, 17 August.

MAZALTOV



We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHDAYS

- Estelle Levin on the occasion of her 80th birthday on the 20th August.
- Lewis Neuburger on the occasion of his 83rd birthday on the 22nd August.

BIRTHS

- Chaim & Chaya Chaikin and Rabbi Yossi & Rivky Chaikin on the birth of a granddaughter in New York

- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great grandson in Johannesburg

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Stanley Stein



BEREAVEMENTS

We wish long life to:

- Philip and Rila Jacobson on the death of their grandson
- Rosalie Solarsh on the death of her husband, Stanley

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



THE SHOFAR IS BLOWN EVERY DAY OF ELUL, STARTING THE SECOND DAY OF ROSH CHODESH, FRIDAY 18 AUGUST, UNTIL THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER