

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER December 2018/January 2019

Tevet/Shevat 5779

### SHABBAT TIMES

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

14 & 15 December – 7 Tevet

🕒 Miketz

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:31

21 & 22 December – 14 Tevet

🕒 Vayechi

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:35

28 & 29 December – 21 Tevet

🕒 Shemot

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:38

4 & 5 January – 28 Tevet

🕒 Vaeira

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:39

11 & 12 January – 6 Shevat

🕒 Bo

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:40

18 & 19 January – 13 Shevat

🕒 Beshalach

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:38

25 & 26 January – 20 Shevat

🕒 Yitro

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:36

1 & 2 February – 27 Shevat

🕒 Mishpatim

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:33

### RABBI'S MESSAGE

#### *Who would you like to bless?*

After 30 years as a community rabbi, I thought I had heard it all. So the experience, one Shabbat morning on the Bimah, really took me by surprise.

Most of you are familiar with the process. Every Shabbat, members of the congregation are called up for an Aliya on the Bimah. After they have recited the brachot over the Torah, a

Misheberach is made for them. This is a blessing made for the person who has just been called up, asking Hashem to preserve him and to make him succeed in his endeavours. Family members and friends can also be included in this Misheberach.

So my traditional question to the man standing to my right on the Bimah is, "Who would you like to bless?" After years of getting to know my community, I know what answers to expect. It is usually the wife, children, grandchildren, sometimes even great grandchildren. It often includes extended family members—some of our worshippers like to specify where the family members reside, Australia, Israel, USA...

There is the man who wants me to include not only the entire Oxford community but also the members of another shul he used to frequent. There is also a congregant who wants a blessing for his sister and for his sisters' family (that's a plural, his one sister having sadly predeceased him). A frequent visitor always asks me to bless his great-nephew and great-niece (anyone know how to say that in Hebrew?).

With experience I can even anticipate—but will never pre-empt—the amount of the (optional) pledge that will be made. Will it be x multiples of "chai" (R18) or an unspecified "Matanah" (=gift).

Then there are surprises like a request to bless a sports team or a pet. Or the time when I was asked to mention the fellow's ancestors (a Misheberach is usually reserved for the living and generally for humans).

But that Shabbat morning, my usual question, "who would you like included in this blessing?" elicited the response, "nobody at this time, Rabbi."

I could not stop thinking about this answer. For sure I have had people called up for Aliyot who have no immediate family. But they always request a blessing for their extended family, their friends, the rabbi and chazzan and the community. Never before had I come across someone who did not want to include anyone at all in a Misheberach.

He was a once off visitor to our shul and I have long forgotten his name, though I cannot forget his response. Is he totally and utterly alone in the world? No relatives at all? No friends, no community, nobody? It shook me to the core.

It really made me appreciate the gift of family, community and friends. Virtually all us are blessed to have human connections, whether flesh and blood (which, of course, cannot be chosen) or friends we have elected. Being a connected member of society is so vital to our functioning within it.

Let us count our blessings.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

## FROM THE REBBETZIN

Our family WhatsApp group is full of pictures of the different families lighting their channukiahs each night. We are not the only ones fill our phones with Chanukah pictures. I know because I have been watching with fascination how my friends and acquaintances have made their WhatsApp profiles and statuses personal candle lightings too. No doubt if I had Facebook, Instagram or Twitter I would see even more pictures.

What is it that we feel, as we look at both adults and children standing around a menorah and gazing into the tiny flames, that catches our hearts and heads?

With our family dispersed all over the world, these pictures give us a glimpse into their lives and homes. They help us feel connected and part of each other's lives. That is why the Chanukah lighting is particularly poignant. These pictures tell us that where ever they are they are doing the same thing we are. They are singing the same songs. They are living the same hopes, values and ideals.

So we watch the first lighting happening in Australia, then a few hours later we join, and a few hours after that the American "lighters" join. In between that we see the lightings of our friends and the pictures of big public lightings.

Publicity on various social media may be relatively recent, but Jews all over have been lighting menorahs in their own homes and shuls since the first Chanukah.

To me these pictures speak of the truth we know, we are part of a people who sing the same songs, whisper the same prayers and live the same hopes and dreams.

Happy Chanukah!

*Rivky Chaikin*

## DVAR TORAH

### *Siege of Jerusalem*

*By Rabbi Noah Weinberg  
(aish.com)*

In Jewish consciousness, a fast day is a time of reckoning, a time to correct a previous mistake. What happened on the Tenth of Tevet that we have to correct?

On the Tenth of Tevet, 2,500 years ago, Nebuchadnezzar began his siege of Jerusalem. Actually, there was little damage on that first day and no Jews were killed. So why is this day so tragic? Because the siege was a message, to get the Jewish people to wake up and fix their problems. They failed, and the siege led to the destruction of the King Solomon's Temple.

Today we are also under siege. Much of the Jewish world is ignorant of our precious heritage. Children whose Jewish education ended at age 13 now carry that perception through adulthood. The results are catastrophic: assimilation in the diaspora, and a blurring of our national goals in Israel.

So what's the message for us? Wake up and understand. What does the Almighty want? If there's a siege, hear the message now. Don't wait for the destruction.

If the Jewish problem today is a lack of appreciation of our heritage, then the solution is clear: increased love of Torah, love of Jews, and love of Israel and Jerusalem. The Almighty is telling us: The siege will not

be lifted until you correct the mistake.

### **Responsibility To Teach**

The Talmud speaks about two sages concerned over the threat of Torah being forgotten by the Jewish people. As a precaution, Rav Chiyah captured a deer, slaughtered it, and gave the meat to orphans. Then he tanned the hides and wrote five separate scrolls, one for each of the Five Books of Moses. He took five children, and taught each of them one book. He then took six more children, and taught each of them one of the six orders of Mishnah, the oral law.

Then he told each of the 11 children: Teach what you've learned to each other. With this, the Talmud says, Rav Chiyah ensured that the Torah would never be forgotten by the Jewish people.

This raises a question: 11 children is a pretty small class. Why didn't Rav Chiyah simply teach all the children all the books? Why did he teach each child only one book?

The answer is that the children having to teach each other was essential to the process. To ensure that Torah should not be forgotten, you have to teach what you've learned to others. That's the secret. You've got an obligation to your fellow Jews. If you know something -- teach it.

Realize that the most destructive, painful, contagious disease of all is ignorance. Ignorance leads to wasted lives and untold suffering.

So if you know the key to happiness, teach it. Do you see human beings walking around depressed, half dead? Give them some joy. If you have the ability, you must help. Otherwise you'll always bear the knowledge of what you "could have done."

This is not about "forcing your opinion" on others. No. A good teacher conveys information that allows the student to get in touch with what he already knows -- and re-discover it on his own. Get others to see and understand it on their own terms.

Don't sell yourself short. You have the ability to make a dramatic impact on others. You don't have to be a U.S. Senator to make a difference. With one piece of wisdom you can help humanity.

### **Soviet System**

The director of Aish HaTorah's Russian Program is Rabbi Eliyahu Essas, a former refusenik from the Soviet Union. He lived there at a time when it was totally illegal to study Torah. Consequently, Rabbi Essas had nobody to teach him, and at the time, he didn't know how to even read Aleph-Bet. So he got a hold of some underground books, hid out from the KGB, and began to teach himself Torah.

After awhile, word got out and people started coming to study in secret with Rabbi Essas. As one of a few of the 5 million Soviet Jews teaching Torah, his time was in great demand. That's why Rabbi Essas made a rule: "Before I begin teaching you, you must agree to teach over what you've learned to

others." In this way, Rabbi Essas was able to multiply his effect.

Although we don't live under an oppressive Soviet regime, the same concept applies. You learned something precious? Say to yourself: "That was fascinating. How did it change me? What did it teach me about living? Now how can I transfer this insight to others?"

Don't forget: Teaching benefits you as well. Until you share an idea, it's not yours. It remains but a hazy notion in your imagination. Having to explain an idea to others forces you to clarify it for yourself. You've taken it out of potential and made it a reality.

When you teach someone, make sure they understand how important it is to teach it over to someone else. If they do, then that's part of your success as a teacher. That's ensuring that Torah would never be forgotten by the Jewish people.

### **One Nation**

There's one more lesson to be learned from the story of Rav Chiyah. By teaching the 11 children only one book each, these children knew they had to learn from one another. The Jewish people are one and we're all in this together. Every person is worthy of profound respect, regardless of their beliefs and level of observance, and there is something to be learned from everyone.

We live in serious times. Whether it's assimilation in America, anti-Semitism in Europe, rampaging jihadists,

or denial of the Jewish connection to Jerusalem, the message is essentially the same: The siege is on and the clock is ticking. We have to communicate the Torah message to our people. It is a matter of utmost national urgency.

Who is responsible? We who believe in the power of Torah and the eternal mission of the Jewish people are required to act. To teach wisdom and be a "Light Unto the Nations."

On the Tenth of Tevet, when Nebuchadnezzar surrounded the city of Jerusalem, we failed to get the message. Will we get the message now? Will we change? Will we wake up to reality?

We've got to care. If we don't make the effort, we don't care enough. We have powers. Are we going to use them?

Get the message. Before the destruction. Now is the time.

*The Fast of the Tenth of Tevet is observed on Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> December. Fast begins 3:51 a.m. and ends 7:15 p.m.*

## **SERVICE TIMES**

### **SHACHARIT (A.M.)**

<b>Sunday and Public Holidays</b>	8:00
<b>Monday to Friday</b>	7:15
18/12: 7:00 (Fast of 10 Tevet)	
07/01: 7:00 (Rosh Chodesh)	
05/02 & 06/02: 7:00 (Rosh Chodesh)	
<b>Shabbat &amp; Festivals</b>	9:00

### **MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)**

<b>Sunday to Thursday</b>	6:15
<b>Friday</b>	6:00
<b>Shabbat</b>	6:15

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Annette Wolk on the birth of a great granddaughter in Australia.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Martin Flekser on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 8<sup>th</sup> December.
- Solly Burgin on his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday on the 10<sup>th</sup> December.
- Amy Feinstein on her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 16<sup>th</sup> December.

- Barry Speigel on his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 17<sup>th</sup> December.

- Jillian Kaplan on her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December.

- Shoshana Kaplan on her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 25<sup>th</sup> December.

- Mary Schneider on her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

- Enid Melamet on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 8<sup>th</sup> January.

- Gillian Bolon on her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 11<sup>th</sup> January.

**BAR/BAT-MITZVAH**

- Naomi Schmidt on the Barmitzvah of her grandson.

- Blima Nudelman on the Barmitzvah of her great grandson, Yitzchak Yeshayahu Schwarz.

**MARRIAGES**

- Blima Nudelman on the marriage of her granddaughter Elisheva Schwarz to Hagay Sussman.

**ANNIVERSARIES**

- Gerald & Shoshana Kaplan on their 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the 11<sup>th</sup> December.
- Clive & Margot Cohen on their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the 29<sup>th</sup> December.
- Joseph & Myrna Davidovitz on their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the 4<sup>th</sup> January.



## PURCHASE A LEAF ON OUR “SIMCHA TREE”

To mark a happy event in your family  
Cost of each leaf is R 540.00 – For details please contact the office



## OXFORD'S HALL OF REMEMBRANCE

*The plaques in the Hall of Remembrance record the names and the date of death of departed loved ones. The lights on the plaques are lit on the Yartzeit and also whenever Yizkor is recited. A special Hazkara memorial prayer is also recited during Yizkor.*

*Cost of a plaque is R720 for the first plaque ordered, R540 for subsequent plaques*