

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 December 2021 & January 2022 Tevet & Shevat 5782

SHABBAT TIMES
<p>🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting 🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah) For service times see page 2</p>
<p>10 & 11 December – 7 Tevet 🕒 Vayigash 🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:28</p>
<p>17 & 18 December – 14 Tevet 🕒 Vayechi 🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:33</p>
<p>24 & 25 December – 21 Tevet 🕒 Shemot 🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:36</p>
<p>31 December & 1 January – 28 Tevet 🕒 Vaeira 🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:38</p>
<p>7 & 8 January – 6 Shevat 🕒 Bo 🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:39</p>
<p>14 & 15 January – 13 Shevat 🕒 Beshalach 🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:39</p>
<p>21 & 22 January – 20 Shevat 🕒 Yitro 🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:37</p>
<p>28 & 29 January – 27 Shevat 🕒 Mishpatim 🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:35</p>

RABBI'S MESSAGE

"Chanukah Lights" is a short video that I used to show my students to help them understand the deeper message of the Festival. That is, back in the day when a 23-minute was considered within the attention span of a school learner—a generation ago... This animated story, featuring the voices of Leonard Nimoy, Judd Hirsch

and Paul Michael Glaser was produced by Gesher in Jerusalem in 1984.

The plot involves a battle of the Alphabets. The Jews have the Lights—depicted א ה ו ג ד ב—which illuminate their lives. Along come the Greeks, with their α β γ δ ε, trying to lure the Israelites to believe that their letters are shinier and that they will get them further. Many follow along and this becomes the core of the battle of the few vs the many.

Chanukah is drawing to an end. I always struggle when the Festival of Lights closes. I allow the Chanukiyah to linger in place, beyond the holiday. It is such an inspiring celebration and we need to find a way to make sure its power continues beyond.

We have lit our Menorah for eight successive nights, in increasing numbers. But as we study the Talmud, we discover that this is just one opinion, that of the House of Hillel. The House of Shamai ruled that we start with eight lights on Day One, decreasing daily. We follow the former view but there is a lesson from both.

The students of Shamai base their practice on diminishing of the influence brought by the allure of α β γ δ ε until it is eventually down to nought. Followers

of Hillel, on the other hand, emphasize the increasing supremacy of א ב ג ד ה as the few were overcoming the many.

In 2021, we are under attack by the Greek alphabet, albeit this time not for our souls. From Alpha to Omicron (except for a couple of letters that were strategically skipped) we are under threat by variant after variant of this most virulent and dangerous virus. It has cost us numerous lives, destroyed livelihoods and has had us living on edge for close to two years.

Scientists will look for cures and vaccines and advise us on the rules we should follow to protect us. Our tools for fighting this war are the letters of our Aleph Bet, woven together to form the words of prayer in our Siddur, the timeless Psalms in the Book of Tehillim and the many pages of Torah books on our shelves. The power of those letters, recited or studied, is what helps us fight this scourge.

May א ב ג ד ה once again overcome α β γ δ ε!

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

You can find the film by searching for "Lights, the Miracle of Chanukah" on YouTube (or by clicking on <https://youtu.be/jdGug6RPU> G0)

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I am not a good traveler. Ever. For weeks ahead of our plans I vacillate between being excited to see the children again, and so full of worries about everything that could go wrong, G-d forbid. This time has been worse than ever.... I, like many others, have not seen my children for two years now. There are little ones who were born during this time that I have never hugged. So the excitement of seeing them has been greater than ever.

This has also made the pre-travel stress greater than ever. Cancelled flights, mandatory PCR tests etc.... etc... all ensure that the excitement is dampened.

As a teacher I can count the many of times I have explained to my classes the concept of 'Tracht gut, vet zayn gut' (Think good, and it will be good). This is the teaching that being optimistic causes good energies to surround us and thus good things will happen. This is a real test for me, trying to live by the lessons I teach, rather than just preaching.

I am working hard to 'think good' and I look forward to seeing all the family on Thursday.

Have a good month.

Rivky

A STORY

How a Los Angeles Uber Ride Led to the Driver's Circumcision

by Mendel Super (chabad.org)

'This is just the beginning for me,' says 38-year-old actor Jake Renner

Jake Renner was feeling depressed. An actor and part-time Uber driver, he hadn't picked up passengers for a year-and-a-half. On a sunny September morning in Los Angeles, Renner decided that it was time to get his life back together. He'd recently quit drinking and was trying to infuse his life with more spirituality. His first ride request in months came through. It was an airport job and Renner almost declined it, concerned that the suitcases might scratch his car. But something compelled him to accept it.

Avi Mogilevsky, 32, an entrepreneur from Atlanta, got into the Uber. He was headed to the airport, returning home, straight from the brit milah celebration (circumcision) of a dear friend's son in Los Angeles.

Mogilevsky spent the first part of the ride

speaking on the phone, telling his wife about the brit he'd just attended. "That irked me. My car is not your office; it's our time to talk," Renner told Chabad.org.

Mogilevsky's phone call revolved around Judaism, and irksomeness aside, Renner was intrigued. When the call ended, Mogilevsky proved to be a warm, jovial passenger, and the two spent the rest of the ride engaged in conversation.

Renner brought up his own Jewish heritage, informing his passenger that while Jake Renner is his stage name, his actual name is Jake Berezovski, which is his Jewish Ukrainian mother's last name. Mogilevsky had Renner bring the car to a stop and put on tefillin. It was Renner's first time doing the mitzvah.

Renner, who was raised Christian, studied at a theological seminary after high school and was ordained as a minister. For a time, he preached, and led services and funerals. But Christianity never really spoke to him, he said, and when he went back to visit Ukraine after moving to California, his mother told

him that she was orphaned of her Jewish parents at the age of 7, and was raised Christian. Something clicked for Renner when his mother told him about their background and since then, he said he often thought about his Jewish identity and what that meant to him.

The quick roadside mitzvah wasn't enough for either party, and the two exchanged numbers. Mogilevsky, who'd volunteered at a Chabad orphanage in Ukraine years before and is of Russian heritage himself, developed a rapport with the Ukrainian-born Uber driver. "He understood me," said Renner.

Mogilevsky, knowing that many Jews hailing from the former Soviet Union never had the opportunity to be circumcised, tactfully brought it up with Renner.

Renner entertained the thought for almost a month before he decided he would do it. He told Mogilevsky of his decision, but also pointed out that he couldn't afford it (an adult brit is typically performed in a medical setting with a doctor observing the procedure). Mogilevsky

immediately assured Renner that he would foot the bill. "I've been asking G-d for help; now I need to do something for Him," said Renner, explaining his decision.

Yaakov, Son of Avraham

On Nov. 14, Mogilevsky flew to California and joined Renner and the mohel, Rabbi Nachman Kreiman, for the ceremony. After the circumcision, Mogilevsky recited the blessing and gave Jake his chosen Jewish name. "... And his name shall be known amongst Israel as Yaakov, the son of Avraham," Mogilevsky chanted, giving Jake—now Yaakov—his chosen Jewish name after the third patriarch, Jacob, the protagonist of that week's Torah portion.

"This is a sign of recognition that you are a Jew," noted Mogilevsky, speaking after the ceremony. "At age 38, you chose to do this beautiful mitzvah. This is what Yiddishkeit is about. We're all brothers, and the Rebbe [Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory] taught us to reach out to every Jew

with love, and that's why I am here today."

Speaking with Chabad.org after his circumcision, Renner said that physically, he's feeling better, and spiritually, "I feel serenity, a feeling of being reunited."

Los Angeles-based friends of Mogilevsky's have been very supportive, said Renner. Levi Nagel is buying him a pair of tefillin, while Shlomie and Nechamy Levin have been sending him homemade meals as he recovers at home. Renner hopes that this will be another step in his Jewish journey, as he begins to explore his heritage and connect with his people.

"I feel welcomed by the Jewish community," said a grateful Renner. "This is just the beginning for me."

SERVICE TIMES

Please check with the office if you wish to come to shul on a particular day to ensure there will be a service.

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday & Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
Friday	6:00
Shabbat	6:15

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Martin & Helene Cook, Alan & Karen Shkudsky and Marion Rapp on the birth of a son, grandson and great grandson
- Masie Ehrlich on the birth of a great granddaughter.

ENGAGEMENTS

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the engagement of their granddaughter Menucha Fox to Mendel Marrus.

MARRIAGES

- Naomi Schmidt on the marriage of her granddaughter Lisa Schmidt to David Nerwich in Johannesburg.

BIRTHDAYS

- Solomon Burgin on the occasion of his 95th birthday on the 10th December.
- Madeleine Fane on her 75th birthday on the 23rd of January.

ANNIVERSARIES

- Mark & Debbie Meltzer on the occasion of their 10th anniversary on the 11th December.
- Samuel & Hazel Benard on their 60th anniversary on the 28th of January.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:



- Sonia Genn
- Nathan Blumberg
- Annette Wolk
- Percy Bloom

BEREAVEMENTS

We wish long life to

- Willie Wittert on the death of his brother, Barney.
- Marlene Goldberg on the death of her brother, Bernard Goldberg

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



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