

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 2022/January 2023

Kislev/Tevet 5783

SHABBAT TIMES

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

9 & 10 December – 16 Kislev

🔊 Vayishlach

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:28

16 & 17 December – 23 Kislev

🔊 Vayeishev

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:32

23 & 24 December – 30 Kislev

🔊 Miketz (Chanukah)

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:36

30 & 31 December – 7 Tevet

🔊 Vayigash

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:38

6 & 7 January – 14 Tevet

🔊 Vayeichi

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:39

13 & 14 January – 21 Tevet

🔊 Shemot

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:39

20 & 21 January – 28 Tevet

🔊 Va'era

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:38

27 & 28 January – 6 Shevat

🔊 Bo

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:35

3 & 4 February – 13 Shevat

🔊 Beshalach

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:31

RABBI'S MESSAGE

All will agree that the number one conversation topic at social gatherings through 2022 was the discussion around which is the best always-on solution. We debated fiercely the advantages of diesel vs petrol generators. Proponents of electric

inverters vehemently defended their recent purchases. Then there were those who wanted to be totally off grid and praise the virtues of solar.

But let us start from the beginning... The very beginning, as in Genesis 1. "In the Beginning, G-d created Heaven and Earth... He said, 'Let there be Light, and there was Light'... And G-d saw that the Light was good..." In fact, says the Midrash, He decided that this first Creation was too powerful, too intense and too good, and hid it. He put it away for the Righteous to enjoy in the World to Come. The Midrash proceeds to disclose the hiding place, by telling us that G-d concealed it in the Torah. So obscured it is not, since if we really want to access it, we know exactly where to go.

A couple of dozen chapters further, in the same Book, we read of the candles of our Matriarch Sarah, which miraculously remained lit from Shabbat to Shabbat. When her recently bereft son Isaac saw the miracle recurring in the tent of his new wife, Rebecca, he knew she too was worthy of being a

Mother in Israel. The candles, lit around the world every Friday night, perpetuate this Light in Jewish homes long after the physical flame has dimmed.

It was Aaron the High Priests' duty and privilege to kindle the Menorah in the Holy Tabernacle every night. These perpetual flames represented the Light of Torah, which emanated from the sanctuary, illuminating the entire world with its teachings, values and morals.

Dark times hovered over the Jewish people when the wicked Haman threatened extermination for all. When his evil decree was annulled, the Book of Esther describes the jubilation with the words, "The Jews had Light..." a verse that now forms part of the weekly Havdalah service. At the end of every Shabbat, we gather around a woven torch-like candle to repeat that same phrase as we usher in the week ahead.

Antiochus tried to extinguish that Light with the laws he passed, banning core Torah observances. His plan was to supplant our religious

practices with what he deemed a superior culture. Hellenism worshipped the body over the spirit, the material over the physical. The ideology threatened to blow out that Light, which we had cherished for millennia. A small band of faithful did the unthinkable when they attacked an army far mightier and better equipped. Having regained control of the Holy Temple, they were able to rededicate it. Once again the Menorah could be lit, symbol of the Torah that would outshine Greeks and subsequent enemies of this Light.

Only pure oil, uncontaminated by Hellenism, would do for this demonstration of the victory of Light over Dark. Of that, as we know well, they could find only one small cruse, sufficient for one day. But the Light shone on, for a full eight days, a demonstration that purity and holiness remains, always on, whatever the circumstances.

Year after year, we celebrate this Festival of Light. No Stage of Darkness can over power it. For our candles of faith, our candles of hope are more powerful than any threat we have ever met.

And soon, please G-d very soon, He will remove the Light from its hiding place. The whole world will appreciate the value and values of this True Light. Always on.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

This article originally appeared in the SA Jewish Report, 9 December 2022

FROM THE REBBETZIN

Today we were blessed again, Baruch Hashem. Another little girl to proudly carry the name of my mother (א"י). I was so anxious while waiting to hear what she would be called. Of course, it means so much to me that they chose this name. It also hurts so much that mom is not here to carry her own name.

So amazing to me how we can contain two opposite emotions in the very same place at the very same time. Life is made up of so many of these opposites.

Today I looked out of my window at a magnificent blue sky and listened to hundreds of birds waking up. I reminded myself again why I fiercely love this country.

One of my all-time favourite novels is "Cry the Beloved Country." This title has been the chorus of so many conversations lately, as we bemoan all the negative things that are happening in our beautiful, beloved country. I am trying hard to remind myself of all the blessings we have here. I am also trying to add a chapter to Tehilim in prayer for this country. And I am acknowledging that sometimes our skies are grey and the clouds bring rain, this is in fact a beloved country. "Cry" can be both happy and sad at the very same time.

Have a good month.

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

How to Change Your Life: A Talmudic Chanukah Debate

*By Menachem Feldman
(chabad.org)*

I want to change. Should I stop engaging in destructive behaviors abruptly, or should I focus my effort on gradually introducing positive behaviors into my life?

My eating habits are terrible. Should I cut out sugary and fatty foods all at once (what's the point of eating a vegetable with one hand, while holding a bottle of Coke in the other?), or should I slowly introduce broccoli and lettuce into my diet?

I want to write a book. Should I stop everything that I'm doing and devote every minute of the next year to the task, or should I focus on writing for 10 minutes each day?

I would like to climb out of my spiritual darkness. I can put all my effort into stopping the negative behaviors. But perhaps I should recognize that for the time being I will not be able to stop entirely, and that I should direct my energy toward introducing productive activities into my routine.

Obviously, no two situations are the same, and in most cases we need to use both tactics in tandem. But there is certainly room for

discussion on where to focus our efforts.

This question is at the root of a Talmudic dispute about the number of lights kindled on each night of Chanukah.

The House of Shammai says: On the first day we light eight, and after that we gradually reduce. But the House of Hillel says: On the first day one is lit, and thereafter they are progressively increased.

Ulla said: In the West [Israel], two sages, Rabbi Yosi bar Avin and Rabbi Yosi bar Zevida, argue. One maintains: The rationale of the House of Shammai is to represent the days still to come, and that of the House of Hillel is to represent the days that are gone. But the other maintains: The House of Shammai's reason is that it should correspond to the bulls [offered on the altar during] Sukkot, while the House of Hillel's reason is that we ascend in [matters of] sanctity but do not descend.

According to Shammai, we start out by lighting eight candles on the first night, and then we decrease by one candle each night. Hillel maintains that we start out by lighting one candle, and then we increase until we have a full menorah on the eighth night. (The halachah follows Hillel.) Why the difference of opinion? Let's examine the second explanation:

Shammai says to decrease, corresponding to the bulls offered in the Temple on Sukkot. Hillel says to increase because, as a rule, we are meant to increase in holiness and not decrease. This requires additional explanation. According to Hillel, why does the Torah command us to decrease the number of bulls offered each day of Sukkot? Does that not contradict his principle that we must increase in holiness? As for Shammai, does he not subscribe to the principle of increasing holiness?

Shammai and Hillel differ on the question of where to begin.

Shammai says that the first thing you must do is fight your evil—completely. When you want to fight evil, you can't take baby steps. You have to come out swinging. You must tell yourself things like "I will never [fill in any destructive behavior] again." If alcohol is your challenge, and you say, "I'll only have three drinks instead of four," you will never win. Taking small steps in the right direction, argues Shammai, is like building a sand castle on a beach: it will be washed away by the first wave of the raging sea.

Therefore, says Shammai, on the first night of Chanukah you must kindle all your lights, as you need every ounce of energy to fight the darkness outside. Here's the good news: Tomorrow it will be a

bit easier. You weakened the evil on the first night, so there is less of it on the second; hence, all you need on the second night is seven lights. Eventually, you will rid yourself of the darkness, and you won't need any light with which to fight it.

Hillel says: Forget the evil.

Perhaps in Temple times we had the spiritual strength to battle the darkness head-on, and that is why the Sukkot offerings decreased every day. In exile, bereft of the spiritual power of the Holy Temple, we need a new strategy altogether.

We need to focus on positive action.

Don't worry about the darkness; just take one small step in the right direction. Just light one small candle. No big deal. Anyone can do it. The key, however, is that tomorrow you add one more light. Small but consistent growth. Before you know it, your menorah will be full.

And so too in our own lives, with our own personal struggles—making small, manageable changes can add up to a great deal of goodness and light.

SERVICE TIMES SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Monday & Thursday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Friday	6:00
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MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Michael & Chaya Mushka Chaikin and Rabbi & Rivky Chaikin on the birth of a granddaughter in Melbourne

BIRTHDAYS

- Solly Burgin on the occasion of his 96th birthday on the 10th December.

- Ronald Katz on the occasion of his 80th birthday on the 31st January.

MARRIAGES

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson and Jeanette Markowitz on the marriage of their granddaughter Chasya Markovitz to Daniel Friedland on 24th November.
- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the marriage of their granddaughter, Nechama Fox to Levi Salek on 1st December

ANNIVERSARIES

- Clive & Margot Cohen on the occasion of their 54th anniversary on the 29th December.
- Neil & Caroline Myerson on the occasion of their 25th anniversary on the 11th January.


BEREAVEMENTS



We wish long life to:

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the death of their daughter Linda Flax.

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

CHANUKAH CANDLE LIGHTING SCHEDULE






 Sunday, 18 December - Light candle at 7:25 p.m.






  Monday, 19 December - Light candles at 7:25 p.m.







   Tuesday, 20 December - Light candles at 7:25 p.m.

   Wednesday, 21 December - Light candles at 7:25 p.m.

    Thursday, 22 December - Light candles at 7:25 p.m.

     Friday, 23 December - Light the Chanukah candles first (after 5:35 p.m.), then the Shabbat candles. Make sure the Chanukah candles are long enough (or sufficient oil is used) so that they will burn until at least 7:55 p.m.

     Saturday, 24 December - Light candles only after Shabbat is out (7:36 p.m.) and after Havdalah

      Sunday, 25 December - Light candles at 7:30 p.m.

*Always place the candles on the right of the Chanukiyah. When lighting, kindle from left to right (the newest candle first)
All times are for the Johannesburg area only. Please inquire about local times if you are elsewhere.*

