

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER December 2023 & January 2024 Tevet & Shevat 5784

SHABBAT TIMES

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

8 & 9 December – 26 Kislev

🔊 Vayeishev (Chanukkah)

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:27

15 & 16 December – 4 Tevet

🔊 Mikeitz

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:31

22 & 23 December – 11 Tevet

🔊 Vayigash

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:35

29 & 30 December – 18 Tevet

🔊 Vayeichi

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:38

5 & 6 January – 25 Tevet

🔊 Shemot

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:39

12 & 13 January – 3 Shevat

🔊 Va'eira

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:39

19 & 20 January – 10 Shevat

🔊 Bo

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:38

26 & 27 January – 17 Shevat

🔊 Beshalach

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:36

2 & 3 February – 24 Shevat

🔊 Yitro

🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:32

RABBI'S MESSAGE

An old man is walking in the dead of night, holding a lantern to help him navigate the darkness of a deserted alleyway. Observing a group of young people struggling to open a door, he approaches to shine the light in their direction. The group of thieves, who have no interest

in being seen, begin to beat the man and chase him away with insults.

The world out there is dark at the moment... Pitch dark. Darker than any time in my living memory. But I grew up on stories of dark. Our history if filled with dark episodes. From our genesis as a people in Egypt, through oppression by Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans. Then there was the Spanish Inquisition, persecutions, expulsions, and blood libels. And I was born in the shadow of the most unspeakable atrocities of the Holocaust, among survivors who rolled up their sleeves to put on Tefilin in Shul in the morning, revealing their tattooed arms.

The common factor of all these darks was not the obscurity. It was the light that shone through—no doubt the reason these stories were being shared with me. A light of hope, deliverance, faith, purity, and morality. They were tales of bravery, of continued study of our holy Torah in impossible circumstances, of matzah baking, tefillin laying and candle lightings under the most adverse of conditions.

Deep down it was about how we remained faithful to our mission of being an 'or

lagoyim'—a light onto the nations—a beacon of faith, morality, social justice, and ethical life. Yes, like that of the old man in the story, the light was not always appreciated, and we were beaten up for staying the course of the high road.

Even in the current conflict that embroils us, we are proud of Israel's Defence Force, behaving at all times in keeping with international law and rules of warfare, and taking precautions to keep collateral casualties to a minimum. Which other army pauses to provide formula and incubators to babies being evacuated from a hospital NICU that sits above terrorist headquarters? Or provides detailed maps for civilians to take shelters ahead of attacks?

Here we are celebrating the Festival of Lights in the wake of the atrocities of a pogrom in our lifetimes—something we were convinced had been relegated into the realm of history. But the Mitzvah is to light the Chanukah lights after nightfall, when it is indeed dark outside.

Powerful images come to mind. First that of the Maccabees re-dedicating the Holy Temple and lighting the

Menorah with oil from a single undefiled vessel.

Then there is the iconic photograph, taken in Kiel in 1931 in the home of the town's spiritual leader, Rabbi Akiva Posner. The Chanukiya is sitting on the windowsill, facing a building across the road adorned with Nazi flags. On the back of the photograph, the rabbi's wife wrote the following: "The flag says, 'Death to Judah', so the light answers, 'Judah will last forever.'" Just a year ago on the second night of Chanukah the Posners' grandchildren lit this Chanukiya in Berlin, in the presence of Germany's President, Frank Walter Steinmeier.

A more recent photo, gone viral in the last few days, shows a Menorah being hoisted atop a building in Gaza, no doubt a huge morale booster for the troops who seem set to spend the holiday on the front.

Then I come across a social media post by Israeli journalist Sivan Rahav-Meir. It is a picture of a Channukiyah at first glance a typical child's holiday project. But a closer look sends shivers up my spine. For on each of the nine branches is inscribed the name of a locality that heartbreakingly became a scene of tragedy on 7/10: "Re'im, Keren Shalom, Zikim, Sderot, Kfar Aza, Be'eri, Nahal Oz, Holit, Nirim". From the darkness emerges the light.

Judah will live forever.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

This article initially appeared in the Chanukah issue of the SA Jewish Report

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I have managed to find a good spot in my house, in between the fan and an open window. Here I don't feel like I'm melting. Actually, if only I could melt a little! I love this time of year. I love the weather, even when it's boiling hot. I love the winding down atmosphere. And I love Chanukah.

This year I am praying hard that Chanukah brings with it the miracle we all speak of, *bayamim hahem bazman hazeh*, in those days, and in these days.

I think we are all living a little (or a lot) on edge. Worrying about our brothers in Israel. Actually, worrying about our brothers all over the world. Even worrying about ourselves here in our beautiful country but surrounded by people who don't always love us.

To me, Chanukah is a reminder that we are not in control. Not of the weather. Not of the war in Israel. Not of the rise in anti-Semitism in the world. The only thing we can control is the good that we do, to make this world a nicer lighter place. A little extra tzedaka, another bit of davening, an extra chapter of Tehilim, just a small act of friendship, or a message of love to someone. Small little things that we can do to brighten this world.

I will try to fill my holiday with some of these things. And may Hashem keep His promise to us to bring peace and safety to all to Israel and to the entire world. Have a happy Chanukah.

Have a good month.

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

TODAY WE ARE ALL MACCABEES

Slovie Jungreis-Wolff (aish.com)

We are all Maccabees, standing for truth and light despite the hatred and evil that has contaminated the atmosphere.

A French-born terrorist killed one and wounded others near the Eiffel Tower while shouting "Allahu Akbar." Havering Council in east London decided it would be "unwise" for the traditional menorah to be installed outside the town hall because it would "risk further inflaming tensions within our communities." The lighting of the menorah has been canceled because it is seen as a menace to society.

University presidents afraid of Hamas sympathizers and their bullying, paint smearing, racist chants have been intimidated into silence, even condoning their hatred and violence as protected under the guise of free speech. Jewish students voicing fears for their life and safety on campus are ignored, their cries to be heard pushed aside and disregarded. Genocidal chants across American college campuses, the bastions of culture, Ivy League education and supposed defenders of democracy, have become normalized and in vogue.

From the Oakland City Council meeting to the disruption of the Thanksgiving Day Parade, we have witnessed those who glorify kidnapping, rape, murder, torture, and beheading. They

celebrate the attempt to exterminate the Jewish people brandishing signs with swastikas, “by all forms, by all means possible”, falsely accusing Israel of killing our own and inventing these evil atrocities. “From the river to the sea” – they echo the vision of Hitler and Nazis, wanting Israel and even the world to be “Judenrein”, cleansed of Jews.

The intentional violation of women has been marginalized by U.N. Women and feminist organizations worldwide. (It took them eight weeks and an enormous outcry to finally issue some measly statement.)

Children snatched on that barbaric day were branded by their captors with burns on their legs from searing hot motorcycle exhaust pipes. Just in case there'd be an attempted escape, the pilfered child would be identified and found. They were also drugged to keep them complacent. We watch clips of a giggling Kfir Bibas, an infant, his angelic smile filling our screen. The day his mother brought him home as a newborn, his 4 year old brother Ariel, kissed his little toes tenderly. Whose heart cannot be broken wondering who is cuddling these babies in the dark of the night, who is wiping away their tears, where are these beautiful redhead boys? Has the entire world lost its soul?

It's easy to lose our breath, our spirit, our fight for a world filled with kindness and light.

We dare not.

For thousands of years the message of the Ten

Commandments given at Mount Sinai has anchored civilization to all that is good and just. “Thou shall not kidnap. Thou shall not murder.” If we grow fatigued and allow the world to turn its back on the eternal wisdom of Sinai, then we have abdicated the Jewish mission. We must stand tall and be a “light onto the nations”, fighting darkness with our light.

How do we keep our strength?

In the darkest of nights, we are given the gift of Hanukkah's light to fortify us and embolden our life-force.

The Greeks sought to bring the Jewish people to their knees. They hunted down those who would study Torah, observe Shabbat, and honor the covenant of circumcision. They violated our women. They brought a pig within the hallowed walls of the Temple, hoping to strip the Jewish people of their sanctity and thus their identity.

Enter the Maccabees. Mattisyahu and his five sons rose like lions. They gathered the valiant, the brave, and the people around them who refused to be silenced. The few amongst the many, the weak against the strong. Many doubted that they would win the battle. Salvation came through the mighty heroism shown not by ferocious militants but by the spiritual priests, the kohanim, who had performed Divine service in the Temple. Their faith infused them with the strength to persevere.

Upon entering the Temple in Jerusalem, they purified and rebuilt. Searching for pure

oil so that they could kindle the lights of the menorah was a search for their “inner oil” as well. There was only oil enough for one night but miraculously, the oil lasted for eight, exploding into an eternal festival of lights.

There are times we believe that we do not possess sufficient oil to fight the darkness that surrounds us. We grow weary. The miracle of Hanukkah speaks to us today. We can feel as if the entire world has gone mad. The darkness is thick, choking, not allowing us to breathe. But we must know that we are all Maccabees, standing for truth and light despite the hatred and evil that has contaminated the atmosphere.

Do you have the oil within?

Of course you do! You are part of this miraculous, eternal nation. We have traveled the four corners of this earth, witnessed every form of persecution and yet, here we are. A nation holding onto our traditions, rediscovering our love for one another, unified and strong.

This Hanukkah plug into the power of the day. Know that deep within, you are the courageous child of the Maccabees, celebrating the eternal strength of the Jewish nation. Am Yisrael Chai!

SERVICE TIMES SHACHARIT (A.M.)

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

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)	
Friday	6:00

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal
Tov to:

MARRIAGES

- Philip and Rilla
Jacobson and Jeanette
Markovitz on the
marriage of Ashi
Markovitz to Shira
Rabson in Johannesburg
on the 4th of December

BAR-MITZVAHS

- Mary Schneider on the
Bar Mitzvah of her
grandson in London on
16th December.

BIRTHDAYS

- Martin Flekser on his 75th
birthday on the 8th
December.
- Amy Feinstein on her 65th
birthday on the 16th
December.
- Barry Speigel on his 70th
birthday on the 17th
December.

- Jillian Kaplan on her 85th
birthday on the 22nd
December.
- Marry Schneider on her
85th birthday on the 3rd
January.

BEREAVEMENTS

We wish long life to

- Clive Wolpert on death of
his wife, Michele

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

CHANUKAH CANDLE LIGHTING SCHEDULE

 Thursday, 7 December - Light first candle at 7:30 p.m.



Friday, 8 December - Light the two Chanukah candles first (after 5:25 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 8:00 p.m.



Saturday, 9 December - Light three candles only after Shabbat is out (7:27 p.m.) and after Havdalah



Sunday 10 December - Light four candles at 7:30 p.m.



Monday, 11 December - Light five candles at 7:30 p.m.



Tuesday, 12 December - Light six candles at 7:30 p.m.



Wednesday, 13 December - Light seven candles at 7:30 p.m.



Thursday, 14 December - Light eight 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.*

