

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

20 North Avenue, Riviera

✉ P.O. Box 87406, Houghton, 2041

☎ 011-646-6020 📠 011-486-2214

🌐 [www.oxfordshul.com](http://www.oxfordshul.com) 📧 [info@oxfordshul.com](mailto:info@oxfordshul.com)

📘 [facebook.com/oxfordshul](https://facebook.com/oxfordshul)

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Shevat 5772

## SHABBAT TIMES

🔊 Parasha - 🕯 Candle Lighting  
🕯 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)  
*For service times see page 2*

10 & 11 February – 18 Shevat  
🔊 Yitro  
🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:27

17 & 18 February – 25 Shevat  
🔊 Mishpatim (*Shekalim*)  
🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:21

24 & 25 February – 2 Adar  
🔊 Terumah  
🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:15

2 & 3 March – 9 Adar  
🔊 Tetzaveh (*Zachor*)  
🕯 6:15 – 🕯 7:08

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

### HERITAGE

I recently had the privilege of spending an entertaining few hours with one of our past chairs, going through some of the history of Oxford. Having grown up in Pietersburg and unfamiliar with most of the people when I started coming to Oxford almost 25 years ago, I was blown away by the rich heritage and calibre (and character) of its members past (and present... make no mistake). I knew it was impressive, I just never realised how impressive it was.

This year is definitely one of retrospection and celebration. The reason being, it is both the 70th anniversary of Oxford Shul as well as the choir's 65th anniversary... now that's a lot of 'song' for thought! In celebration we are planning a Choir festival shortly after Shavuot and an Anniversary Gala Dinner in August.

Now wouldn't it be fantastic if we could capture Oxford's rich history as well. As a community, let's start compiling memories of

Oxford. Please either email, fax or Facebook your memories of people, experiences and events (humorous or otherwise), to the shul office and let's see how far this project takes us. Now there's a challenge for you!

The Oxford Italian themed dinner has been postponed to the 17th of February and will be catered by Stan and Pete in the Simon Kuper. The price is R160 per head, kids under 12, R80. Please make every effort to attend what will be a fun and relaxing evening.

We are still looking for people to take children's services on Shabbat. This is our priority project and if you know of anyone who may be interested please let us know or let them contact the shul office or myself.

Maintenance at the shul has started and you will have noticed that the parking lot has been cleaned up. If you haven't noticed it means you haven't been to shul recently... so where have you been?? ☺ Many thanks go to WBHO who assisted in the cleanup.

Lastly, included in the newsletter are the membership fees and renewals for this year. An enormous amount of work and many hours have been invested in the shul's finances and budget for this year. We are both happy and relieved to be able to restrict the shul fee increases to 6% in keeping with estimated inflation for the year.

Did anyone see where January went?

All the best for Feb, don't blink or you might miss it!

Warm regards.

Brian Levy

## RABBI'S MESSAGE

### I JEW, YOU JEW

A few days ago, I initiated my son Betzalel into the Mitzvah of putting on Tefilin. It was an emotional moment. When we first came to Oxford, Betzalel was a young toddler, still running around the Shul with his long, pre-opsherin hair. How the years have flown—his Bar-Mitzvah is now less than two months away. It was particularly moving as he is our youngest son, so it was passing over the torch to the next generation. I have now taught this mitzvah to my offspring—now it is over to them to PG teach their own boys one day.

I recently told from the pulpit the story of my discussion with a congregant, many years ago, who wished to take a step ahead in his observance of Judaism and wanted guidance about which new Mitzvah he should take on. I suggested daily Tefilin, but he argued that he preferred to take upon himself "something from which he would benefit" like, for example, Torah study. (I won the argument.)

Tefilin bind our minds and our hearts to a deeper connection with Hashem. The scrolls within carry messages about our faith in Hashem, including the first two portions of the Shema. Tefilin also tie and connect all Jews around the world. They bind us with

generations past and with generations to come.

Just before the Six Day War, the Lubavitcher Rebbe launched the first of his Mitzvah Campaigns, asking his Chassidim to encourage Jews everywhere to put on Tefilin. Rabbi Mendel Futerfas, an elderly Chassid who had only recently come out of the USSR, was sitting on a plane next to a man he thought was Jewish. He tried to strike up a conversation, first in Yiddish, then in Russian, and finally in German. No luck.

But Reb Mendel was determined to get the man to put on Tefilin. He reached into his suitcase, and drew out the little velvet bag. While his neighbour watched in fascination, he removed the black boxes and unwrapped them. Drawing a deep breath and mustering up all his meagre English vocabulary he turned and, pointing first to himself then to the passenger, said, "I Jew, you Jew. I Tefilin, you Tefilin."

A recent advert in the SA Jewish Report features my good friend and colleague, Rabbi Dovid Haller, who succeeded in putting on Tefilin with over 13000 people in the course of last year. This year he made it his personal challenge to reach a goal of 18000!

The Tefilin Bank of Africa ([www.tefillinbankafrica.co.za](http://www.tefillinbankafrica.co.za)) is a recent innovation on this continent. It offers financial assistance to those who would otherwise struggle to afford a pair of Tefilin.

If you need a new pair of Tefilin, or instruction on how to put on Tefilin, please contact me and I will gladly get together with you.

Remember, "I Jew, you Jew. I Tefilin, you Tefilin."

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

## FROM THE REBBETZIN

One minute the sun is shining, the next it's overcast and storming and before you know it the sun is shining again.

Sunday afternoon Chanala and I were going out—the sky was a little gray, nothing really to worry about. In fact we had just all come back inside from a swim. We got into the car and started out. Three blocks down the road it began to rain. Six blocks down the road it began to pour. Seven blocks and there was loud thunder and cracks of lightning.

By the time we reached Glenhazel the roads were flooding on either side, the storm drains were making tall powerful fountains. We couldn't even get out of the car at our destination. We waited a while and the rain stopped. The sun came out and the roads cleared and we went inside to visit.

I keep thinking about it. The cycle of life—the storms and the sunshine. I take courage in the knowledge that while storms may be unexpected or fierce—if we just wait a short while, the rain will stop, the sun will come out again and we will hardly be able to tell that there even was a storm.

May all our days be filled with sunshine.

Have a good month

*Rivky*

### SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
23/02 & 24/02 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00	

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

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
Friday	5:45
Shabbat	6:15
from 03/03	6:00

## STORIES

### THE MYSTERIOUS TEFILIN

by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan  
<http://www.innernet.org.il>

Have you ever felt so close to another human being that every moment together was precious? Where every letter and memento from this person was something to be treasured? What if this person gave you a meaningful gift? Every time you looked at it or used it, would it not remind you of this special relationship?

To the best of our understanding, G-d's very act of creation was an act of chesed, giving, and of love. It was a love so immense that the human mind cannot begin to fathom it.

Tefillin are a sign of this bond between G-d and man. Faith and love are very tenuous things. We can speak of them and think about them. But unless we do something about them we tend to forget; Tefillin serve to help us remember.

If you would open a pair of Tefillin, you would find that they contain four parchments. One of these parchments consists of the famous Sh'ma -- "Listen Israel, the Lord is our G-d, G-d is One." Tefillin concretize for us that G-d created the universe, orchestrates world history and is intimately involved with our daily lives.

The essence of the Torah is its commandments, mitzvot in Hebrew. The word mitzvah comes from the root meaning "to bind." Every commandment or mitzvah serves to draw us close to G-d and strengthen this connection.

With every mitzvah we forge a spiritual bond with G-d. In the case of Tefillin, this bond is physical as well as spiritual. We literally bind G-d's love symbol to our bodies. Thus, our sages teach us that the commandment of Tefillin encompasses all others. Here, we can actually see and feel the bond.

Another important theme of the Tefillin is the Exodus from

Egypt -- "And it shall be a sign... because with a strong hand G-d brought you out of Egypt." The Exodus took place over 3,000 years ago. But it still plays a most important role in Judaism.

To understand the reason for this, we must realize how Judaism differs from all other religions. Other religions begin with a single individual. He claims to have a special message and gradually gathers a following. His followers spread the word and gather converts, and a new religion is born. Virtually every world religion follows this pattern. The only exception is Judaism.

G-d gathered an entire people, three million strong, to the foot of Mount Sinai, and proclaimed His message. Every man, woman, and child heard G-d's voice decreeing the Ten Commandments. Thus was the bond forged between G-d and Israel. This took place just seven weeks after the Jews left Egypt. It was the climax of the drama of the Exodus.

This was an event unique in the history of mankind. It is most important not to forget...

The Torah tells us (Deut. 4:9, 10), "Be very careful and watch yourself, that you not forget the things you saw with your own eyes. Do not let them pass from your minds as long as you live. Teach them to your children, and to your children's children. The day when you stood before G-d..."

The parchments in the Tefillin speak of the Exodus.

The Tefillin thus serve to bind us to our past, especially to this unique event in our history. We can understand this on a deeper level. But first we must understand the true significance of the Exodus and Sinai. We must know what it means to say that an entire people heard G-d's voice.

To hear G-d's voice is no simple matter. Only prophets hear G-d's voice. What happened at Sinai -- was that an

entire people, men, women and children achieved the level of prophecy.

There are many ways to approach G-d. You can approach Him on an intellectual level. You can ask questions and seek answers until you achieve some understanding of the Infinite. This is the realm of the philosopher.

You can seek G-d on a more intimate level, in prayer and in meditation. There may then come a time when your self ceases to exist and all your senses are numbed. Suddenly, a door seems to open if only by the slightest crack. You catch a glimpse of the Divine, and discover something more wonderful than anything on earth. Somehow you feel a unique closeness to G-d. To describe it would be as impossible as to describe the beauty of a sunset to a blind man. But you know it is there. The door has been opened to you, and you have peered through the crack.

This is the level of the mystic.

But sometimes the door is opened all the way. A person experiences more than merely a glimpse. He hears a clear voice and receives a lucid message. This is the highest possible human bond with G-d. It is the level of the prophet.

At Sinai, every Jew attained this level. Tefillin bring us back to this unique moment. Not many of us can be philosophers. Very few of us can attain the level of the mystic. Prophets no longer walk the earth.

But we can remember...

When we bind the Tefillin to our bodies, we relive the infinite bond of love that was forged at Sinai. There were tzadikim -- saints -- who achieved a mystical experience every time they put on Tefillin. They could feel the words of the parchments literally burning into their heart and soul. We may never achieve this level.

But we can begin...

G-d has given us the commandment of Tefillin and clearly spelled out how to do it. Tefillin may seem like simple boxes and straps. But they are much, much more.

When a man wears Tefillin, he binds himself to the very highest spiritual level. He achieves a closeness to G-d that even the deepest meditation could not accomplish. Of course, when a man wears Tefillin and also contemplates their significance, his very thoughts are elevated close to G-d. But even the physical act in itself can bring a man to the loftiest heights. We can also understand this in a much simpler sense.

In order to create this bond, our Tefillin must conform exactly to G-d's design. The slightest deviation breaks this link. A good analogy is that of a radio. A radio is specifically designed to receive a particular type of signal. Every element in it is needed for this. Cut a single wire, remove a single capacitor, no matter how small, and you no longer receive the signal. There are precise rules by which a radio must be built. These include all the laws of electromagnetism and circuits. If these are not exactly followed, the radio will not function.

Tefillin are our receiver for a specific spiritual signal. As such, they must be designed to receive this particular kind of signal. Violate a single rule, and they become like a radio with a transistor removed. The bond just no longer exists.

We can carry the analogy still further. You would have to have an extensive scientific education to even begin to understand how a radio works. You would have to know calculus and differential equations and all the complexities of electromagnetic theory. But still, even the youngest child can turn on a radio. The same is true of the mitzvot. A lifetime of study might lead you to begin to understand their significance. But anyone can put them on and receive the signal.

**MAZAL TOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- June Berger on the birth of a grandson
- Gail Mittan on the birth of a granddaughter
- Annette Wolk on the birth of a great grandson
- Michael and Tracy Salomon on the birth of a grandson
- Sara and Dean Abro and Ronnie and Susan Woolf on the birth of a son and grandson

**MARRIAGES**

- Millicent Sacks on the marriage of her granddaughter, Monique Klugman to Jeff Sadick
- Theo Rutstein and Gary Rutstein on Gary's marriage to Tamsyn Egnos
- Blima Nudelman on the marriage of her granddaughter in Jerusalem

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Sybil Pollack on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on 4<sup>th</sup> February
- Hessel Utian on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on 18<sup>th</sup> February

**ANNIVERSARIES**

- Michael and Valerie Bloom on their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 8<sup>th</sup> February
- David and Sharon Hirschowitz on their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 24<sup>th</sup> February

**REFUAH SHLEMAH**

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:

- Hessel Utian
- Dennis Wainer

**BEREAVEMENTS**

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- The family of Doris Cooperman on her death
- Albert Epstein on the death of his brother, Max
- Deborah Jacobson on the death of her father, Barnett Shapiro

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



Have you visited the Shul's page yet?

[www.facebook.com/oxfordshul](http://www.facebook.com/oxfordshul)

Make sure to click on the  button at the top of that page and Oxford notices will start appearing in your own news feed.



# IS ON THURSDAY 8 MARCH

Megilah Reading on Wednesday night 7 March and again on Thursday 8 March

Details to follow...