

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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February 2013

Adar 5773

### SHABBAT TIMES

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

15 & 16 February – 6 Adar

🕒 Terumah  
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:22

22 & 23 February – 13 Adar

🕒 Tetzaveh (Zachor)  
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:16

1 & 2 March – 20 Adar

🕒 Ki Tissa (Parah)  
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:09

8 & 9 March – 27 Adar

🕒 Vayakhel & Pikudei (Hachodesh)  
🕒 6:14 – 🕒 7:02

### CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

With the year well underway now, and me not having that much to say, I would just like to bring your attention to the combined initiative of the Shuls of the Northwest. Blairgowrie, Northcliff, Victory Park, Greenside, Emmarentia and Oxford have decided to try bring some (more) Jewish activity to this side of Johannesburg.

They are starting off with a lecture series which will run over the next 5 - 6 months. The first talk will be on Lithuanian Jewry. Please contact the shul for more details and please try and support this initiative.

We are heading into Adar which means Purim is not far away. Here too, please keep

an eye out for Oxford's Purim plans.

Menachem Gudelsky has now taken over children's services and is doing a fine job with the kids. If you need some time out on Saturday mornings, or if your kids need time out from your grandchildren, bring them on over! We'll take care of them.

The choir and Chazan must have had a really good holiday as they are sounding fresh and refreshed. It's great to have them back and davening in the big shul again.

Lastly, the fortnightly gemara shiur has started up again. All men are welcome to join in our relaxed and mentally stimulating shiur. If you like mind puzzles, Sudoku or any logic requiring activity then you will enjoy this. Come try it out.

Hope you all have a wonderful Adar

Warm regards

Brian Levy



### RABBI'S MESSAGE

Did Haman realise that Queen Esther's invitation to a private banquet two nights in a row was in fact his own death warrant? Probably not. To him, being invited along with the King to the Queen's private chambers was the ultimate honour that he thought he now deserved for years of loyal and dedicated service to the Monarch.

What was however Esther's motivation for having Haman present to witness his own downfall? Surely it was more than just a very cruel game of cat-and-mouse, elevating him to the greatest of all heights before finally disgracing him? And what were the Jews of Shushan to think, when they heard that the Jewish Queen is partying with their tormentors in the palace, while a death threat is hanging over their heads?

In fact Esther's invitation to Haman was a clever ploy to shake her brethren out of complacency. Initially there had been panic in the Jewish community when word got out of Haman's irreversible decree, signed with the

seal of Achashverosh. But quickly enough, Jewish leaders were reassuring the masses: 'Do not fear! We have one of us in the palace. This has been the closest guarded secret of the Persian royal family, but the Queen is Jewish. Just leave it to Esther, she will resolve this crisis. Before long there will be no danger.'

So the Jews rested on their laurels, confident that with her charm and powers of persuasion, the Persian/Jewish Queen would remove Haman from power, and have the decree annulled. Esther was quick to sense the danger; she was being seen as the salvation, and all faith was being placed in her, rather than in the one Above. Esther lacked no confidence, but she also knew the ins and outs of the Persian royal palace. Above all, she was a woman of deep religious belief, and recognised that any political success she may meet with would be through the help of the Al-mighty.

The Jews of Shushan needed to turn to Hashem very rapidly, recognise the danger they were in and plead with Him for mercy. Esther decided on shock therapy. Quickly enough the rumours began to spread: 'Have you heard? Our very own Esther had a wine party with our enemies, Haman and Achashverosh! And they are both invited for the following evening again. Surely she is a traitor, a

hypocrite who cannot be trusted. We must turn to G-d as He is the only one who can help us.'

Her therapy worked, and the Jews of Shushan turned to the Al-mighty in true repentance. They were forgiven, Haman executed and his powers transferred to Mordechai. And each year, as we celebrate the miraculous victory and read the Megilla, we are to remember the above lesson of Purim as well.

When Hashem sends us, in one way or another, the message that we are to change our ways, to reassess ourselves and our commitment, it is easy to fall into complacency and to find quick and easy - yet impractical - solutions to our troubles. We can overcome problems only by being honest with ourselves and through real personal commitment to change. It is naive and unrealistic to hope that others, better placed or better qualified than ourselves, will remedy our own or our communal ills.

Have a most joyous Purim!

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

SHACHARIT (A.M.)	
Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
<small>21/02 (Fast of Esther): 7:00</small>	
MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)	
Sunday to Thursday	6:15
Friday	5:45
Shabbat	6:30
from 16/02	6:15

## DVAR TORAH

### THE HOLIDAY WHEN WE BECAME JEWISH

By Naftali Silberberg  
([www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org))

What is the significance of the name "Jew"? Where does the word come from and what does it mean?

The word Jew (Yehudi in the Hebrew) is a derivative of the name Judah (Yehudah), Jacob's fourth son; hence calling someone by this name would seemingly imply that the person is a descendant of that particular tribe. However, as is well known, Jacob had twelve sons, progenitors of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, all of whom comprise our great nation. Why, then, is the entire Israelite nation known as "Jews"?

(The conventional answer to this question is that the majority of Jews today are descendant from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin—the two tribes which comprised the "Kingdom of Judea." The other ten tribes, the members of the "Northern Kingdom," were exiled to unknown lands. There must, however, be a deeper reason for the fact that the Chosen Nation has been called by this name for close to 2500 years!)

Perhaps this question can be cleared up by analyzing the very first individual to be dubbed "Jew." The first instance of this word appears in the biblical Book of Esther, which chronicles the story of Purim: "There was a Jewish man in Shushan the capital, whose name was Mordechai the son of Yair... a Benjaminite" (Esther 2:5).

That's right: the first "Jew" was actually from the tribe of Benjamin!

An objective study of the Purim story reveals that the whole frightening episode was plainly avoidable. The entire incident was a result of Mordechai's obstinate

adherence to a code of behavior which was clearly outdated and inappropriate for the times. Mordechai was an elderly rabbi who yet recalled days – more than half a century beforehand – when the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem and Torah Law was supreme. His snubbing of Haman might have been condign during that generation. But things had changed dramatically. The people of Israel were in exile. How did Mordechai dare put his entire nation in danger of extinction by slighting the king's favorite minister? Apparently someone neglected to inform this sage that the ability to conform is the key to survival...

Mordechai, however, thought otherwise; and he had a famous precedent supporting his "foolish" actions. Many years earlier, a powerful Egyptian ruler wished to take his ancestor, Benjamin, as a slave. Benjamin's brother Judah wouldn't hear of such a possibility. In what would be his proudest and most defining moment, Judah completely ignored all royal protocol, angrily approached the powerful ruler – who, unbeknownst to him, was actually their brother Joseph – and threateningly demanded Benjamin's release.

Judah is the embodiment of the exiled Israelite who must walk a thin line: While he must live at peace with his neighbors, follow the laws and customs of the land, and "pray for the peace of the regime," he has the courage of his convictions to stand up against all the powers that be in order to defend his ideals. In the words of Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch, "Only our bodies were sent into exile; not our souls!"

Mordechai "the Jew" was a proud student of his great-uncle Judah. He knew that Torah law forbids a Jew from bowing to Haman (and the statuette which dangled from a chain around his

neck), and for him that was the final word. Indeed, Judah's and Mordechai's actions were vindicated as events unfolded--no harm came to either of them as a result of their brave conduct.

Leading by example, Mordechai succeeded in implanting this sense of pride in the hearts of the masses. When Haman issued his decree of annihilation, not one Israelite even considered abandoning his religion in order to be spared death. At that moment, we all became "Jews." Accordingly, the Book of Esther is the first place where our nation as a whole is referred to as Jews.

The name stuck. Because the next 2,500 years would repeatedly

test our "Jewishness." Under countless regimes – both friendly and, as was usually the case, hostile – we struggled against friends and enemies who wished to impose their will upon us at the expense of our relationship with G-d. Again and again we proved ourselves true to G-d, earning the name Jew through oceans of blood and tears.

The grand story of history concludes in similar fashion as the Purim story: we are here to tell the tale and our enemies aren't... The joy of Purim is greater than any other holiday because it tells the story of the nation who never allowed its soul to be shackled--the story of the Jew.





**SHULS OF THE NORTH WEST**

**INVITE THE JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**TO A SERIES OF DYNAMIC TALKS**

**Launching on 12 February 2013 with Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein**

**R30 ENTRANCE FEE. REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED**

<p><b>HUGH RAICHLIN (Audio-visual)</b>  <b>THE JEWS OF LITHUANIA</b>            Date: 12 February 2013            Venue: Greenside Shul            Time: 7:45pm            Contact: 011 788 5036</p>		<p><b>DR LEONARD CARR</b>  <b>GETTING RID OF MENTAL CHAMETZ</b>            Date: 13 March 2013            Venue: Blairgowrie Shul            Time: 7:45pm            Contact: 011 789 2827</p>	
<p><b>PENINA TAYLOR (USA-Israel)</b>  <b>MISSIONARY IMPOSSIBLE</b>            Date: 10 April 2013            Venue: Victory Park Shul            Time: 7:45pm            Contact: 011 782 5247</p>		<p><b>RABBI GIDON FOX</b>  <b>CAN I BE AN ORGAN DONOR?</b>            Date: 21 May 2013            Venue: Emmerentia Shul            Time: 7:45pm            Contact: 011 646 6138</p>	

UNION OF ORTHODOX SYNAGOGUES OF SOUTH AFRICA  
 A PROJECT OF THE UOS

**MAZAL TOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great grandson

**ENGAGEMENT**

- Cynthia Katz on the engagement of her granddaughter, Natasha Katz to Ben Selwyn, in Sidney

**BAR/BATMITZVAHS**

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the batmitzvahs of their twin granddaughters
- Leon & Juliette Reich on the barmitzvah of their grandson

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Sybil Pollack on her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on 4<sup>th</sup> February
- Irwin Slotar on his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on 5<sup>th</sup> February
- Sharon Hirschowitz on her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on 22<sup>nd</sup> February
- Lily Sarembok on her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday on 28<sup>th</sup> February

**ANNIVERSARIES**

- Albert and Lee Epstein on their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 6<sup>th</sup> February
- Frank and Irene Salomon on their 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 11<sup>th</sup> February

**REFUAH SHLEMAH**

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:

- David Genn
- Tiby Friedman
- Mirah Wilks
- Bessie Shneier

**BEREAVEMENTS**

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- Pearl Chipkin on the death of her husband, Mervyn
  - Clive Cohen on the death of his brother, Stanley
  - Solly & Beryl Smith and Vivienne Frame on the death of their grandson, Dean Smith
  - Beverley Gurwicz, Debbie Cloud and Michele Ynclan on the death of their father, Israel Gurwicz
  - Jonathan & Peter Graff and Janet Rapp on the death of their father, Jack Graff
  - Rosemary Harris on the death of her mother, Molly Hollander
  - Zachary Zaltzman on the death of his mother, Perl
- May Hashem comfort them and their families among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem and grant them long life.



*BOOKING NOW OPEN FOR OUR*

# PURIM BRAAI

**SUNDAY 24 FEBRUARY, IN THE SHUL GARDEN**

**Megilah Reading at 11:30 a.m., followed by braai**

For bookings phone the office 011-646-6020 or [info@oxfordshul.com](mailto:info@oxfordshul.com)  
*Payment (when booking): Adults R95.00; Children (12 & under) R50.00*