

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER February 2026 Adar 5786

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### SHABBAT TIMES

🔊 Parasha - 🕯️ Candle Lighting  
🕯️ Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)

20 & 21 February – 4 Adar

🔊 Terumah  
🕯️ 6:15 – 🕯️ 7:18

27 & 28 February – 11 Adar

🔊 Tetzaveh (*Zachor*)  
🕯️ 6:15 – 🕯️ 7:11

6 & 7 March – 18 Adar

🔊 Ki Tisa (*Parah*)  
🕯️ 6:14 – 🕯️ 7:04

13 & 14 March – 25 Adar

🔊 Vayakhel & Pekudei  
(*Hachodesh*)  
🕯️ 6:08 – 🕯️ 6:56

### RABBI'S MESSAGE

It is exactly 40 years since Rivky and I boarded Pan American World Airways Flight 152 at JFK, headed for Jan Smuts Airport in Johannesburg, after a short refuelling stop in Sal Island, Cape Verde. Armed with the Rebbe's brocha, we were proud to join his international army of Shluchim. Our mission was clear: to bring Moshiach by reaching out to one soul at a time, one mitzvah at a time.

It was a different world back then. Our negotiations with the Lubavitch Foundation in the months prior to this flight had taken place over telex. (The younger generation may have to Google that.) Email was unheard of, and fax machines were not

commonplace. Eventually, discussions were concluded, tickets booked, and suitcases packed. We were on our way to change the world—one soul at a time, one mitzvah at a time.

Even in that different world, settling in South Africa was a culture shock for me. While we were travelling, the Space Shuttle Challenger had blown up at launch, killing all the astronauts on board. I sat down in front of a radio, turning the dial in vain to find a 24-hour news station for updates. Back in New York I had been spoiled with two news-only stations: WCBS on 880 AM and WINS ("You give us 22 minutes, and we'll give you the world") on 1110 AM. Both stations are still operating on the same frequencies—we still don't have one. I then discovered that the single television station broadcast only a couple of hours a day, alternating daily between the two national languages of the time.

This may have been trivial, but perhaps the cherry on top: the state-of-the-art telephone I had packed in our bag to plug in at our South African home would not work, as touch-tone digital dialling had not yet reached these shores. I felt like I had entered a time warp.

It did not take long, however, to discover a beautiful country, a beautiful community, and beautiful people. Yidden deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, punctilious about Friday night shul attendance, with homes open in remarkable hospitality. Souls ready to be ignited by the flame of Yiddishkeit.

The world has progressed over the years. South Africa has virtually closed the gap in technology and development. It will not be long before we have Teslas and Starlink here.

The Chaikins have changed and evolved. From a naïve young newly-married couple to a growing family, then seeing the children leave the family home for overseas one at a time, to happy empty-nesters in our old(er) age.. From my initial posting as Director of Activities for Chabad, based at 33 Harley Street in Yeoville, to Cape Town for over a decade, and eventually back to Johannesburg to serve this community.

What has not changed is our mission as Shluchim. Nor have the people. So we continue to bring Moshiach by reaching out to one soul at a time, one mitzvah at a time.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

**FROM THE REBBETZIN**

My organs are vibrating, my head is pounding, and there are hundreds of colours dancing before my eyes. Apparently, that was music... and to moan about it reveals one's age—you are immediately labelled as old.

But the people were so happy. They danced and sang along to the music.

*“Od yoter tov...” It is going to get even better...*

*“Geshmak to be a Yid”—it feels good to be a Jew...*

And even if you were not a dancer, you tapped your feet and clapped your hands.

The month of Adar begins this week—the month that reminds us that no matter what is going on in the world, no matter what is going on in our personal lives, we trust that it will get better and better, and that it is *geshmak* to be a Yid.

So even when you are at the loudest and noisiest bar mitzvah, and even though we may have been labelled as old, we know that things will get better. And we know without doubt that it is *geshmak* to be a Yid.

And so I wish you a very happy Purim, a happy month, and just happiness in general.

Have a good month.

*Rivky*

**DVAR TORAH****The Lion King and the Book of Esther**

*by Saul Blinkoff (aish.com)*

***They have more in common than you think!***

What do The Lion King and the Book of Esther have in common? More than just royalty, dramatic plot twists, and a whole lot of suspense. Both stories teach us about responsibility, about stepping up when it's easier to stay silent, and about using our voices to protect those who need us.

And let's be real—while Purim is the funnest (yes, that's a word today) holiday on the Jewish calendar, the actual story isn't all fun and games. There's political intrigue, assassination plots, and a villain with a weird hat who's basically trying to wipe out an entire nation. Sound familiar? Yeah, history really does love to repeat itself.

And unfortunately, today we're facing some pretty big threats again— Hamas, rising antisemitism, and of course, the ongoing battle over which hamentashen filling is the best. (It's poppy seed, don't fight me on this.)

But before we get to today's fight, let's talk about Esther.

**Esther's Moment of Decision**

The Purim story takes place in ancient Persia,

where Queen Esther, a young Jewish woman, is married to King Achashverosh. (If you don't know how to pronounce that, just mumble and pretend you do—works every time.) Meanwhile, the evil Haman, who must have had the worst personality in all of Persia, convinces the king to sign a decree wiping out the Jewish people.

When Mordechai hears about this, he tells Esther she has to go to the king and plead for their survival. But there's one problem—going to the king uninvited is a great way to get yourself executed. (Royal life, am I right?) Esther is terrified and wants to wait for the right moment. But Mordechai gives her the ultimate Jewish guilt trip:

*“If you remain silent now, salvation will come to the Jews from another place—but you and your father's house will be lost.”*

Translation: You have a chance to step up here. If you don't, someone else will—but you'll regret it forever. No pressure, right?

So, Esther does what any Jewish woman would do in a crisis—she fasts for three days, prays, and then walks into the throne room like an absolute queen (literally). The king extends his golden scepter, she pulls off an epic strategy involving multiple banquets, and boom—Haman gets what's coming to him, and the Jewish people are saved.

**Simba’s Moment of Decision**

Now let’s talk about The Lion King. Simba, the young lion prince, watches in horror as his father, Mufasa, dies (cue childhood trauma). Convinced by his sketchy uncle Scar that it’s all his fault, Simba runs away and adopts Hakuna Matata—the philosophy of zero responsibilities and all-you-can-eat bugs. He spends his days chilling in paradise, lounging in hammocks, and avoiding his problems like a college student ignoring emails from their professor.

Meanwhile, back home, Scar turns the Pride Lands into an absolute disaster. (Basically, the guy was Haman with a mane.) Then, Simba’s childhood friend Nala shows up and drops some bad news:

“Simba, if you don’t go back, everyone’s gonna die, and you’re responsible.”

Simba’s response? “Hakuna Matata!” (Translation: Yeah... I’m good here.)

But then comes the wake-up call. Rafiki, the crazy but wise baboon, smacks him on the head and leads him to a vision of his father. In the clouds, Mufasa delivers the ultimate truth bomb:

“Remember who you are!”

And just like that, Simba realizes he can’t just sit back and let his people suffer. He returns, fights Scar, and reclaims the throne. Moral of the story? Running away from responsibility doesn’t make it disappear. (Also, never trust your shady uncle.)

**This Is Our Moment of Decision**

So what do Esther and Simba have to do with us today? Everything.

Right now, the Jewish people are facing another defining moment. Hamas has made it clear that its goal is the destruction of Israel. Meanwhile, antisemitism is spreading like a bad TikTok trend, from violent attacks to misinformation on social media.

And yet, so many of us hesitate to speak up. We think, I’m just one person—what difference can I make? But here’s the thing: If Esther had stayed silent, if Simba had stayed in his hammock, their people would have suffered. And if we stay silent now, we let others tell our story for us.

**Winning the Battle on Social Media**

In today’s world, the battlefield isn’t just physical—it’s digital. While the Jewish people are winning on the ground, we’re losing the war on social media. And if we don’t step up, others will control the narrative.

Some people think, I don’t have a huge platform—what difference can I make? But guess what? If you have even 10 followers, you’re an influencer. You don’t need millions of people listening to you—just one. Every time you share facts, correct misinformation, or proudly show Jewish pride, you create a ripple effect.

And let’s be honest—if we have time to post about our brunch, our gym selfies, and our latest Amazon finds, we have time to stand up for the Jewish people.

**The Question We Must Ask Ourselves**

The Purim story teaches us that God will always protect the Jewish people. The question is: What role do we want to play in this story?

Will we sit back like Simba in his jungle paradise? Will we wait for the “perfect moment” like Esther almost did? Or will we realize—like they both did—that there is no perfect moment? The time to act is now.

So, the choice is yours. Will you take responsibility? Will you remember who you are?

<b>SERVICE TIMES</b>	
<b>SHACHARIT (A.M.)</b>	
Monday & Thursday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30
<b>MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)</b>	
Friday	5:45

**MAZALTOV**



We wish a hearty Mazal tov to:

**WEDDINGS**

- Marion Rapp on the marriage of her grandson, David Rapp, to Rivka Alpert in Johannesburg in the 1st of February.
- Martin and Sylvia Lewison on the marriage of their son, Adam, to

Miri Jaffe in London on 10<sup>th</sup> of February.

**ENGAGEMENT**

- Neil and Caroline Myerson on the engagement of their daughter Rebecca to Daniel Class

**BIRTHDAY**

- Ivan Epstein on his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February

**BIRTHS**

- Gary and Melanie Epstein on the birth of a granddaughter.

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

**BEREAVEMENTS**

We wish long life to

- We wish long life to Martin Lewison on the death of his mother, Jette

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



**FAST OF ESTHER**

**MONDAY 2 MARCH**

Fast begins: 4:52 a.m. – Fast ends: 6:55 p.m.



**PURIM**

**MONDAY NIGHT 2 MARCH**

**Megilah reading: 7:00 p.m. -- Refreshments after Megilah reading**

**TUESDAY 3 MARCH**

Shacharit: 6:45 a.m.; **Megilah Reading: 7:30 a.m. -- Breakfast after the service**

**Second Megilah Reading: 5:30 p.m. at Chaikin Residence**

*Seudah (light dinner) after the Megilah reading*

