

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

ה'תשע"ג

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January 2013

Tevet / Shevat 5773

## SHABBAT TIMES

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

11 & 12 January – 1 Shevat

🕒 Va'era (Rosh Chodesh)

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:39

18 & 19 January – 8 Shevat

🕒 Bo

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:38

25 & 26 January – 15 Shevat

🕒 Beshalach

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:36

1 & 2 February – 22 Shevat

🕒 Yitro

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:32

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear friends

We survived the predicted end of the world (that's the problem when you don't have all the facts at hand) and 2013 is upon us.

Congratulations to the Matriculants of 2012. The results really were excellent... very well done. We wish you all much success for your future.

Pesach is early this year which means Purim is also early. We will be holding Oxford's 70th anniversary celebrations toward the middle of the year. In all respects we will keep you up to date.

Children's services will start up again on the 18th of January.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a great 2013. I'm sure it will be a wonderful year for you and your family as well as for Oxford.

Warm regards

Brian Levy

## RABBI'S MESSAGE

There is a story about a Shul that could not get a minyan over the holiday period because so many people had gone away. Sadly they had to lock up the synagogue and place a small sign on the door reading: 'Closed for the Holiday season.' A passer-by with a wry sense of humour scribbled on the bottom of the sign, 'G-d is on vacation.'

Fortunately at Oxford, we succeed in maintaining a minyan right through the season. At times it is a squeeze, and necessitates a quick phone call and a few minutes' wait, but in the end we always get there.

Nonetheless, as I look around the Shul the past few weeks, I am sorely tempted to ask the same question that Hashem asked Adam on his first day in the Garden of Eden: "Ayeka?" "Where are you?" (Genesis 3,9). The pews are emptier and we've held the Shabbat services in the small shul.

What makes asking this question irresistible is that the answer so closely resembles that of the embarrassed Adam, "I was afraid because I was undressed, so I hid" (Genesis 3,10). Indeed the current temperatures are more conducive to worshipping the god Sun, in various forms of undress, in Plettenberg Bay, Umahlanga

Rocks or other such beautiful settings, than to swelter through a Kabbalat Shabbat or Shabbat morning service in a Shul.

Rashi, the medieval Torah commentator, gives us a wonderful insight into the above verse. He tells us to understand the word 'naked' figuratively rather than literally. After all, why should Adam have been embarrassed of Hashem? Undressed, he says, refers to his spiritual state. He was stripped of Mitzvot. Having just failed to observe the one and only commandment Hashem had given him, Adam felt utterly ashamed of his bareness.

Summertime means beaches, braais, and generally slowing down the pace. Inevitably, this laid-back lifestyle, whether one has gone away on holiday or remained behind for quiet time here in Joburg, leads to a more relaxed attitude in our relationship with G-d. But the truth is that being laid-back need not be synonymous with being lax.

As the new school and business year begins, it is sometimes difficult to get back into the swing of things, and to pick up the pace spiritually. It is against this background that I ask you all, "Ayeka?"

Welcome back to Oxford!

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

## FROM THE REBBETZIN

Holidays fascinate me. People leave the comforts of their homes, their beds, their own bathrooms, their books and conveniences and choose to go into self-imposed exile and call it a holiday. One of my friends told me about the fantastic week they spent camping! How their tent leaked in a big storm in the night and they slept in the car, and the ground was too muddy to walk to the communal toilets. But the pure air and freedom was so worth it!?

I try not to let anyone in on the secret of how nice December is here in Joburg. If too many people realize they may stay and spoil it for us!

But this year we are joining the holiday makers. Leaving our comfortable house, beautiful weather and quiet neighborhood to join the crowds on holiday for a few days.

Our children were desperate. I kept picturing Ita, on her first day back at school, when the teacher makes everyone write a story titled "my holiday" and Ita just stares at a blank page... so Jewish mothers' guilt set in, and we are off.

Guilt and sacrifice have traditionally been a Jewish mother's method of parenting. But those often are just titles or excuses for going the extra mile to do things for the people we love. Mostly, when we go the extra mile, push ourselves to do something a little more for someone else, (not only our children) we are rewarded with deeper and happier relationships that benefit us even more than them.

Have a good month.

*Rivky*

## A STORY

([www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org))

In 1798, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi was imprisoned on the charge that his teachings undermined the imperial authority of the czar. For 52 days he was held in the Peter-Paul Fortress in Petersburg.

Among the Rebbe's interrogators was a government minister who possessed broad knowledge of the Bible and of Jewish studies. On one occasion, he asked the Rebbe to explain the verse: "G-d called out to the man and said to him: Where are you?" Did G-d not know where Adam was?

Rabbi Schneur Zalman presented the classic explanation offered by the commentaries: the question "where are you?" was merely a conversation opener on the part of G-d, who did not wish to unnerve Adam by immediately confronting him with his wrongdoing.

"What Rashi says, I already know," said the minister. "I wish to hear how the Rebbe understands the verse."

"Do you believe that the Torah is eternal?" asked the Rebbe. "That its every word applies to every individual, under all conditions, at all times?"

"Yes," replied the minister.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman was extremely gratified to hear this. The czar's minister had affirmed a principle which lies at the basis of the teachings of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov<sup>3</sup>- the very teachings and ideology for which he was standing trial!

"Where are you?" explained the Rebbe, "is G-d's perpetual call to every man. Where are you in the world? What have you accomplished? You have been allotted a certain number of days, hours, and minutes in which to fulfill your mission in life. You have lived so many years

and so many days - Rabbi Schneur Zalman spelled out the exact age of the minister - Where are you? What have you attained?"

In 1807, the Russian town of Zhlobin hosted an encounter between two great Chassidic communities. The occasion was the famous "Zhlobiner Wedding" in which a granddaughter of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi wed a grandson of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev.

At the wedding, Rabbi Schneur Zalman lifted his glass and proclaimed: "Lchaim! May the Almighty provide His people with all that they need, both materially and spiritually!"

"Shouldn't it be the other way around?" objected Rabbi Levi Yitzchak. "Shouldn't one put 'spiritual' before 'material'?"

"I'm only saying it as our forefather Jacob did," answered Rabbi Schneur Zalman. "First he asked (Genesis 28:20) that G-d should 'provide me with food to eat and clothes to wear,' and only then, in the following verse, did he pray that 'The L-rd shall be my G-d.'"

"Can you compare Jacob's material life with our material life?" challenged Rabbi Levi Yitzchak.

"Can you compare Jacob's spirituality with our spirituality?" countered Rabbi Schneur Zalman.

*Rabbi Schneur Zalman's 200<sup>th</sup> yartzeit is observed on 24<sup>th</sup> Tevet this year (6 January)*

SHACHARIT (A.M.)	
Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)	
Sunday to Thursday	6:15
Friday	6:00
from 11/01	5:45
Shabbat	6:30

## DVAR TORAH

### *Three Apps for the New Year*

By Sara Debbie Gutfreund  
([www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com))

#### **Three ways to deepen your resolutions.**

"Do you guys celebrate New Year's?" a non-Jewish friend recently asks me.

I think of Rosh Hashanah, the prayers, the shofar and the apple dipped in golden honey. We weren't really 'celebrating' the New Year; we were being judged. We were thinking of what we could change. We were remembering the birthday of mankind and the King who creates every detail of the coming year on that day.

"The Jewish new year was in September," I reply.

Then she shows me three new apps that she bought for her new year's resolutions. One app tracks her diet. Another one organizes and helps to improve her work schedule. And the last one is a 'happiness app' that asks her to fill in her happiness level at various times of the day so that she can figure out what gives her the most joy in life. My friend is thoughtful and giving, but I doubt those apps are going to help her because they don't address the key foundations of change.

So I thought of three new ideas for apps that encompass some of the essentials.

**The Free Will App.** Plug in the habits you want to change and rate the degree of difficulty you have changing each habit. Every time you change a habit to the extent it becomes natural for you, the app will automatically move your free will point to another level on the battle field. For this app to work at its optimum, you must log every minute of the day as a potential choice that you can

make. To advance you can insert only "I will" or "I choose" statements. The app won't work with sentences that begin with "I'll try" or "I should."

Special bonus: anytime you regret and change a bad choice that you made, the mistake is automatically transformed into an accomplishment that upgrades your free will point.

#### **The Higher Purpose App.**

List your resolutions and insert a deeper meaning for each one. For example, if you want to lose weight, ask yourself why. I want to lose weight in order to be healthy and fulfill my life's purpose. This app trains you to become aware of your higher goals and helps you stay committed to them. Knowing your ultimate goals in life gives you the focus and determination to accomplish them.

This app takes all your resolutions and turns them into a personal mission statement that appears every hour on your screen to remind you what you are living for.

#### **The Interconnectivity App.**

This app shows you the butterfly effect of your actions, for good and for bad, on your family, your community and the world. It reminds us how interconnected we really are.

This idea is based on an interview with some of the parents whose children were tragically murdered at Sandy Hook. The parents of Jessica Rekos recalled saying goodbye to their daughter that morning before school and frantically searching for her at the firehouse when they heard the news. They looked desperately for a sign of her black, glittery Uggs and her long, brown hair. No one would give them any information until Jessica's father begged one of the state

troopers to tell him if all the parents remaining in that firehouse could assume their children weren't coming back. The trooper nodded with tears in his eyes, and the Rekos went home and sat on Jessica's bed and cried.

After airing this video, an emotional Megyn Kelly interviewed a doctor specializing in post-traumatic stress. He said that we shouldn't watch these types of interviews because people can experience vicarious post-traumatic stress. And then he said something that broke my heart: "Americans should keep in my mind that this isn't a national tragedy. It's a personal tragedy for the parents whose children were killed."

"I think many people would disagree with you, Doctor," Kelly replied.

I can't see how any parent – or any human being for that matter – doesn't feel the tragedy on a national level. We all lost some essential light of our shared humanity that day.

This app reveals the interconnection of our lives with others. When we integrate positive changes into our lives, we are happier and this happiness then spirals outwards. And when there is a tragedy in the world it boomerangs backwards to our communities, our families and ourselves. We are responsible for one another. We need to feel each other's pain and share in each other's happiness.

Perhaps this is what we can all think about as 2012 becomes 2013 – the challenges in the past year that we have helped each other through, the storms that we have weathered together, and the joy and blessing we have brought into each other's lives.

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Aaron and Maisie Ehrlich on the birth of a great grandson
- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great granddaughter

**BAR/BATMITZVAHS**

- Devorah Nates, Rose Selesnik and Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter and great granddaughter

**ENGAGEMENTS**

- Dinah Levinson on the engagement of her grandson, Dean Kann to Tanya Cohen

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Bessie Shneier on her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on 21<sup>st</sup> January

**ANNIVERSARIES**

- Neil and Caroline Myerson on their 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 11<sup>th</sup> January
- Aaron and Maisie Ehrlich on their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 17<sup>th</sup> January

**REFUAH SHLEMAH**

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:

- Devorah Nates
- Maureen Meyerson
- Valerie Harris

**BEREAVEMENTS**

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- Bernard Binkin on the death of his brother, Michael
- Steven and Anthony Jossel on the death of their mother, Barbara
- Irene Ossip, Barbara Klug and Paul Fine on the death of their father Leslie

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



## PURCHASE A LEAF IN OUR “SIMCHA TREE”

to mark a happy occasion in your family  
Cost of each leaf is R 360.00 - For details please contact the office

**SPONSOR A BROCHA**

at the Shul on the occasion of a personal or family Simcha, to commemorate a Yartzeit, birthday or anniversary.

*For details and bookings contact Lily at the Shul office*

**OXFORD'S HALL OF REMEMBRANCE**

*The plaques in the Hall of Remembrance record the names and the date of death of departed loved ones. The lights on the plaques are lit on the Yartzeit and also whenever Yizkor is recited. A special Hazkara memorial prayer is also recited during Yizkor.*

*Cost of a plaque is R540 for the first plaque ordered, R360 for subsequent plaques*

