

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

ה'תש"ע

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January 2014

Shevat 5774

SHABBAT TIMES

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

17 & 18 January – 17 Shevat

🕒 Yitro

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:38

24 & 25 January – 24 Shevat

🕒 Mishpatim

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:36

31 January & 1 February – 1 Adar I

🕒 Terumah (Rosh Chodesh)

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:33

7 & 8 February – 8 Adar I

🕒 Tetzaveh

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:39

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear fellow Oxfordians

2013 was an eventful year in general as well as within the Oxford community. We set in motion strategies to ensure the financial stability of the Shul as well as spent large amounts of time sorting out other matters which had come to a head. These now done we look forward to focusing on that which was started in 2013 as well as community initiatives to get Oxford (and Oxfordians) more active and involved.

Let's dedicate 2014 as the year of 'Oxford Active'... who knows, we may even make Sir Richard Branson proud!

Wishing you everything of the best for 2014

Warm regards

Brian Levy

RABBI'S MESSAGE

January is a time for beginnings. The diary is blank. The desk calendar-pad is brand-new and neat. Although our year begins in September with Rosh Hashanah, this is still a time for fresh starts: a new cycle in the workplace, the start of a school year.

A fresh start means new resolutions: commitments (some of which are even kept up) to be a better person, to become organised, to stop smoking, to attend a Shiur or to go to Shul more often. In this regard we Jews living in a primarily non-Jewish environment have a double advantage.

For us the drive to take good decisions takes place twice a year: at Rosh Hashanah-time, when we suddenly become aware of the impending Day of Judgement and realise that we must better our ways, and again at the start of a new secular year.

Our Sages tell us that we are fortunate in another respect when it comes to decision taking. The Talmud (Kiddushin 40) teaches us that 'Machshava Tova

Hakodosh Baruch Hu Metzarta le'Maaseh' - 'The Holy One blessed be He combines a good thought with a good deed'. Our rabbis explain this in two ways. Hashem already gives us credit for the undertaking alone of a good deed; the full reward is due even if the act is never carried out because of circumstances beyond our control, as long as the intentions were noble. Furthermore, Hashem 'combines' the thought and the deed, meaning that He makes it easier for the actual Mitzvah to be performed once the good resolution has been made.

Do not misunderstand this as an exhortation to take on countless resolutions just for the sake of the undertaking, and as a guarantee of great rewards for empty promises. The 'good thought' referred to in the Talmud refers to a genuine and sincere decision to perform a Mitzvah.

With a new leaf turned over and starting with a brand new clean slate, will you not consider a new Mitzvah in your lifestyle?

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I hate this time of year, a day or two before the new school year begins. Some people are excited by the fresh clean books and new stationery. Some people are apprehensive about their new teachers or worried about what the year ahead will bring. Most are excited to see their friends and colleagues again.

But year after year, these days find me in a state of panic or dread. For at least a week before, I do not sleep well. I spend my days with a knot in my stomach and a thumping in my heart.

I love school. I loved it as a student and I love it as a teacher. And once it actually starts, I enjoy the routine and the stimulation.

Doubt is surely one of the most difficult places to be. When we are not sure what will be; when we do not know how something will turn out; if we do not know what to believe... in all parts of life, not knowing is scary. In fact King Solomon teaches that resolution of doubt is the greatest joy.

So anytime we move from one stage to another, whether it is something small (like from holidays back to work) or something big (like singlehood to marriage), the transition time is scary.

Even though I and so many others may be dreading going back to school and work, by the time you read this most holiday makers will be happily back in routine. May everyone's changeovers indeed be happy. May this academic and work year be a success for one and all.

Have a good month.

Rivky

A STORY

THE LEAF

It was the summer of 1896, and Father and I were strolling in the fields of Balivka, a hamlet near Lubavitch. The grain was near to ripening, and the wheat and grass swayed gently in the breeze.

Said Father to me: "See G-dliness! Every movement of each stalk and grass was included in G-d's primordial thought of creation, in G-d's all-embracing vision of history, and is guided by divine providence toward a G-dly purpose."

Walking, we entered the forest. Engrossed in what I had heard, excited by the gentleness and seriousness of Father's words, I absentmindedly tore a leaf off a passing tree. Holding it a while in my hands, I continued my thoughtful pacing, occasionally tearing small pieces of leaf and casting them to the winds.

"The Holy Ari," said Father to me, "says that not only is every leaf on a tree a creation invested with divine life, created for a specific purpose within G-d's intent in creation, but also that within each and every leaf there is a spark of a soul that has descended to earth to find its correction and fulfilment."

"The Talmud," Father continued, "rules that 'a man is always responsible for his actions, whether awake or asleep.' The difference between wakefulness and sleep is in the inner faculties

of man, his intellect and emotions. The external faculties function equally well in sleep; only the inner faculties are confused. So, dreams present us with contradictory truths. A waking man sees the real world; a sleeping man does not. This is the deeper significance of wakefulness and sleep: when one is awake one sees divinity; when asleep, one does not.

"Nevertheless, our sages maintain that man is always responsible for his actions, whether awake or asleep. Only this moment we have spoken of divine providence, and unthinkingly you tore off a leaf, played with it in your hands, twisting and squashing and tearing it to pieces, throwing it in all directions.

"How can one be so callous towards a creation of G-d? This leaf was created by the Almighty towards a specific purpose, and is imbued with a divine life-force. It has a body, and it has its life. In what way is the 'I' of this leaf inferior to yours?"

From the writings of the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, whose Yartzeit we marked on 10 Shevat (11 January)

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
<small>31/01 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00</small>	

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
Friday	5:45
Shabbat	6:30

DVAR TORAH

**RAISING CHILDREN
& TU B'SHVAT**
**Embracing the mission to
nurture the inherent
potential of our children.**

*Rabbi Moshe Don Kestenbaum
(aish.com)*

There is no better parable in my eyes to parenting a child than tending a seed into a tree. We are entrusted with a precious seed from God to help see it develop and grow. We do not choose its type, we do not control its process of growth; we just do our best to give it what it needs to grow and flourish, and sit back and watch. This perhaps is why the Hebrew word for offspring is “zerah” – which means seed.

Some of us are handed seeds that need little talent and attention to grow, while others were entrusted with a bit more complex seed. We must not become frustrated and upset at the seed or the One who handed it to us, but rather embrace our role in our special mission. Certainly screaming at the seed, “What’s a matter with you? Why can’t you grow already?” will only retard its development.

We don’t control if and when our children will grow. Our objective is to give them as much nourishment as we can. We embrace them for who they are. We show them how beautiful the Torah is. We water. We provide sunshine. Just because you don’t see immediate growth does not mean nothing is happening right now.

When we see a plant break the surface of the ground, things did not begin to happen now. They have

been happening months before; just it is not visible to the naked eye. Year after year I see a boy in twelfth grade who is learning and growing while he was performing poorly in eleventh. Did he just wake up now? No! It just took time until he was ready to process all the internal growth and development into external action.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains most beautifully that herein lies the significance of the holiday of Tu B'Shvat. As he articulates in his poetic style: “Though still in the middle of the bleak embrace of winter, the gentle murmur of the awakening spring begins its hidden work. In the core and the arterial network of the trees, silently and softly, hidden from casual view, the new sap flows announcing the coming of spring.”

Parenthetically, I think if we were more in touch with the real growth process of our children and people in general, we would pick up on our child’s true internal state. A parent will tell me that they don’t see any significant change; just maybe he is showing a little more courtesy at home. At that point I become excited and say, “Wow, that’s great. That’s a sign of real internal growth taking place. He is maturing. With God’s help, we will see more to come.” Conversely, we would notice negative things brewing far before they are out in the open and thus be able to intervene and help earlier.

As parents and educators our focus should not be on producing fruit; our focus should be on nurturing the seed. If one manipulates the

tree in an unhealthy way to produce fruit sooner than it is ready, its long term production and most often even its short term will suffer. We must focus on giving plenty of water and sunshine, and allow each child to blossom in his way and at his time.

Every display of love is another ray of sunlight. Every positive word is another drop of water. Every positive experience contributes to the realization of the seed’s potential. And conversely, every negative experience does damage.

We are certainly living in turbulent times. The storms around us are blowing stronger and stronger winds. While we should do our best to block whatever winds we can, the only real and long term solution is by developing a tree with deeper and stronger roots. We must do our best to implant each child with a great sense of self worth and love for Torah. If not, he is at risk to being blown away by the storms. He has no roots keeping him attached to the ground.

Parents and educators must firmly believe in the potency of every seed they were handed. They must be confident that if they give it everything it needs to flourish, it will ultimately blossom it a wondrous tree that will bear beautiful fruit, for it will. There may be a long winter stretch where nothing has broken the surface, but they must realize that their efforts are not in vain. They are cultivating growth. We should bear in mind that sometimes the most precious fruit take the longest to ripen.

MAZAL TOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Selwyn and Marlene Zwick on the birth of a grandson
- Solly and Sylvia Jossel on the birth of a great grandson
- Devorah Nates and Rose Selesnik on the birth of a granddaughter and great granddaughter in New York
- Avril Wolpert on the birth of a grandson in Jerusalem

ENGAGEMENTS

- Clive and Rhona Gilbert on the engagement of their son, Anthony, to Danielle Marciano

MARRIAGES

- Sam and Jill Nudelman, and Craig Nudelman on Craig's marriage to Gabi Sulcas on 26th January

BIRTHDAYS

- Mary Schneider on her 75th birthday on 3rd January
- Enid Melamet on her 85th birthday on 8th January
- Gillian Bolon on her 60th birthday on 11th January

- Barbara Meyerowitz on her 75th birthday on 21st January

ANNIVERSARIES

- Joseph and Myrna Davidovitz on their 55th anniversary on 4th January
- Max and Valerie Port on their 50th anniversary on 5th January

REFUAH SHLEMAH

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:



- Stan Solarsh



PURCHASE A LEAF IN OUR "SIMCHA TREE"

On the occasion of Tu Bishvat to mark a happy event 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

