

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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July 2013

Av 5773

SHABBAT TIMES

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

5 & 6 July – 28 Tammuz

🔊 Matot & Masei

🕯 5:11 – 🕯 6:02

12 & 13 July – 6 Av

🔊 Devarim

🕯 5:14 – 🕯 6:05

19 & 20 July – 13 Av

🔊 Va'etchanan

🕯 5:17 – 🕯 6:08

26 & 27 July – 20 Av

🔊 Ekev

🕯 5:20 – 🕯 6:11

2 & 3 August – 27 Av

🔊 Re'eh

🕯 5:24 – 🕯 6:14

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Frustration!!

I guess the three weeks between the fast of the 17th of Tammuz and 9th of Av is the perfect time of the Hebrew calendar to be frustrated.

Now I am not referring to having to compile a message for the newsletter... again... feels like only yesterday the Rabbi was calling for June's letter, but rather to two issues which the Shul has had to deal with recently, and still needs to bring to a close.

One of which is the water which the Rabbi

mentioned in the Oxfordian a week or two back. The other you'll have to wait till the AGM which will be in early August.

I do want to thank those who are involved in sorting out these issues as well as those who have offered assistance. A special thanks must go to Councillor Marcelle Ravid who worked quickly and effectively and managed to salvage the water crisis. Thank you! Thank you!

We will get to the bottom of these issues, have no fear, and the Shul will be better off for it PG.

On a more exciting, much less frustrating, note, we are planning the 70th Anniversary celebrations for October. It will be a Gala dinner not to be missed.

A number of fund raising initiatives surrounding the celebrations will be launched and I urge you to please assist, not just financially but also in networking with ex-pats and Oxfordians of days gone by. We'll keep you updated.

Wishing you a frustration free Av and meaningful Tisha b'Av

Regards

Brian Levy

RABBI'S MESSAGE

In the winter of 1984 I spent a few weeks in bed, ill with pneumonia. I distracted myself by reading and I recall one book in particular, for obvious reasons: George Orwell's "1984" which was for some reason suddenly very popular.

The thought of Big Brother watching and hearing our every deed and word was unsettling. But this was mere science fiction. No technology existed capable of snooping and recording such vast amounts of information.

Some years before, in my junior Yeshiva years, I had attended a 'musar shmues' by one of the rabbis. He was expounding on the famous words of Pirkei Avot, "Know what is above you: an eye that sees, an ear that hears and all your deeds are recorded in a book." He explained that one day, when we meet our Maker for our final judgment, they will pull out a huge reel-to-reel tape machine and we will have to listen to every ill word we had spoken in our lifetime. I had no trouble believing that somehow every one of our deeds is remembered on High. But I recall wondering where in Heaven they could possibly store such a huge collection of information...

A couple of days ago, I read that "1984" had suddenly become a very popular read once again. In the past couple

of weeks Amazon's sales of the book increased by 6000%! This coincided with Edward Snowden's leak to the media about the USA's PRISM project. In case you have been living on a different planet, Snowden revealed that the US's NIA has been collecting and storing vast amounts of electronic data on ordinary citizens for years.

Hey, we're no longer talking science fiction here. This stuff is now possible and is actually happening.

In 21st Century language, Pirkei Avot is saying, "Know what is above you: a camera rolling, a voice recorder taping and every byte immortalized on a server." Chilling...

If the rabbi at my childhood yeshiva was giving the same talk today, he would describe the following scene: You arrive in Heaven on Judgement Day. A white clad angel quietly pushes a memory card across the desk. Shivers go up your spine as they slide the SD card into the slot and you realize that this tiny electronic chip is actually a full record of your life, subpoenaed from the NIA by the Heavenly Court. The SD card contains every one of your emails, text messages, tweets and Facebook postings. Every single one of your Google searches is also there, even the ones you made sure to carry out in "Incognito" mode! There are hours and hours of telephone conversation records and of CCTV footage.

And that's not even science fiction. It's real!

At the time of writing, Snowden is still taking cover at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport. But there's no hiding from the One Above.

Have a great month

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

One of the perks of teaching high-school is exam time. It is true that it is a massive job to mark and do reports, and it is true that invigilating exams is so boring it can drive you to... but it is also true that there is no preparing or teaching, and my schedule becomes more flexible and eases me nicely into school holidays.

For the students however, it is not a nice time of year. Their marks and reports are focused mostly on how they perform in a single exam. This means that if they have an "off day" it can easily spoil a year or term of diligent work. So for them it is a very stressful time of the year.

This morning I watched as different students were preparing to write their algebra exam, each exhibiting different signs of stress. One girl simply burst into tears.

How different is exam time to our lives as Jews. In Yiddishkeit, it isn't the mark at the end that counts but rather the work we do all the way. It doesn't even have to be consistent. Hashem counts all of our efforts as we plod along—a bit of charity here, a kind word there, a good davening, an hour of torah study—and adds it all up.

So even as our "exam time" looms (Rosh Hashana / Yom Kippur) we do approach it with some trepidation, but also with confidence that all our pre-exam effort counts too.

How lucky are we?!

Have a good month.

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

THE PALACE AND THE PIGEONS

Tzvi Freeman (chabad.org)

Once there was a king whose palace had been ransacked by wild hordes. For the wood and stone of the palace he had no tears, but for the crown jewels, passed down for many generations—for these there was no consolation.

The king gathered his wise men, but none could give counsel. The jewels had been scattered by those barbarian hordes throughout the land and throughout many other lands, the most precious of them taken across the seas to the farthest reaches of the globe. But the king had a daughter very dear to him, and in her wisdom she saw what needed to be done.

So the king and his daughter trained many pigeons to return to the palace, to recognize the crown jewels and carry them back on their journey. Each day they would release the pigeons in the pastures about the palace, and some would discover the jewels scattered about and return them to their home. And the king was glad and smiled to his daughter.

Then the king's daughter sent them further away, and again they returned, carrying a few more of the jewels her father had lost. As far away as they were sent, they hastily returned.

But the most valuable jewels, those in the most distant lands and most hidden places, those jewels had not yet been recovered. The pigeons did not venture far enough to find them—they were too eager to return home.

The king's daughter knew what must be done, but she could not tell her father, for it was too hard, too dangerous, too awful. But he looked in her eyes and he knew. And so he destroyed his palace once again, razing it to the ground, removing its every trace. When the pigeons attempted to return, they found nothing, no more than an empty pasture with scattered stones and smouldering wood. They were hungry for their food and sick for their home.

Until the most adventurous of the pigeons travelled far abroad and found other palaces, and in those palaces they found hidden the king's most precious jewels, and gathered them and polished them and kept them in their wings. And at night they cried, for they knew this was not their home.

And now has come the time for them to all return.

I can't explain to you everything meant by this story. If I could, what would I need a story for? I would just explain it to you without the story. But I can tell you some of the teachings that form its basis.

For one, you need to know what the great Kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, known as the Ari Hakadosh ("The Holy Lion"), taught about our world. He taught that there is not a thing in this world that does not contain a holy spark. Even the greatest evil, even the harshest darkness that does everything it can to oppose its Creator and deny any purpose or goodness in the world, even that contains a divine spark. And it needs that spark, because without it, it would not be able to exist

for even a moment. Why, then, is it evil? Because the spark it contains is so dim, so concealed, that its only way of expression is to be the opposite of what it truly is.

So you might think that if that spark is so dim, it couldn't be a very important spark. Maybe G-d could do without it. But the Maggid of Mezeritch taught just the opposite, that it is the highest sparks that fall furthest from their source. So in places that are warm and friendly to holiness, there are going to be some warm and friendly sparks. But if you want the most powerful sparks, the sparks that talk about the real essence of G-d, then you need to deal with the places that are furthest from their source.

As long as all these sparks are held hostage in things and places that don't know the real meaning of what they hold inside, the world is not fulfilled. That is how the Ari describes Torah and Jews: they are the way those sparks become reconnected to their source.

There is one other thing I would like to say about this story; the rest I will leave to you. In our history, the pattern of destruction and exile has repeated itself many times. We began in exile, in the land of Egypt. Then there was the destruction of the first Holy Temple and exile to Babylonia, and then the second destruction and a very lengthy exile, which we still endure. There is no other nation that has been spread so far apart, yet retained identity as a single whole, always with hope to return. And all of it was part of His divine plan, to retrieve all the

sparks of holiness. Which is what we did, because wherever we go, we use the materials, the foods, the music, the customs of that place in a Torah way.

But as far as I am concerned, the greatest destruction and the greatest exile began seventy years ago. Because, until then, if a Jewish person was looking for a teacher and a guide to find his or her path to G-d, or just looking for some spirituality in life, there were tzaddikim just around the corner, and everyone knew that was so. But when the communities of Europe were suddenly and brutally destroyed, along with all but a handful of the great tzaddikim, that is when the greatest darkness began. That is when this bizarre detour began, that if a Jewish soul wants to find meaning, she goes to drink from the wells of others. True, she will never be satisfied from those wells, since they are not her own. But a soul that lived for 3,300 years basking in spirituality simply cannot bear the dry, parched land.

And, unfathomable as it may be, that had purpose as well.

But now has come the time for us to all return home

SHACHARIT (A.M.)	
Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
08/07 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00	
16/07 (9 Av): 7:00	
MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)	
Sunday to Thursday	5:15
16/07 (9 Av): 5:00	
Friday	5:20
Shabbat	5:00
from 03/08	5:15

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Cecile Hendler on the birth of a grandson in the USA
- Philip and Aileen Shifren on the birth of a granddaughter in the USA
- Calman Sarachik on the birth of a great grandson
- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great granddaughter in Israel

BIRTHDAYS

- Lily Lesser on her 90th birthday on 28th June
- Meyer Chafkin on his 91st birthday on 7th July

- Raynor Brodie on her 80th birthday on 7th July
- Alan Lieberman on his 55th birthday on 9th July
- Rebecca Flekser on her 93rd birthday on 10th July
- Lilian Benard on her 20th birthday on 26th July
- Solly Jossel on his 99th birthday on 27th July

MARRIAGES

- The Gudelsky family on Avi's Marriage to Nechi Levitan in the USA on 12th July

REFUAH SHLEMAH

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:



- Hadassah Kobrin
- Justin Abratt

BEREAVEMENTS

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:




- Bram Meyerson on the death of his mother, Maureen

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?

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.



Fast begins: Monday 15 July 5:30 p.m. - Fast ends: Tuesday 16 July 5:57 p.m.

Monday:

5:15 p.m.: Mincha, followed by Maariv

5:45 p.m.: Reading of Book of Eicha

6:30 p.m.: Video Presentation by Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation

Tuesday:

7:00 a.m.: Shacharit: followed by Kinnot (Tallit & Tefilin are **not** worn)

12:15 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.: Video Presentation by Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation and other Shiurim

5:00 p.m.: Mincha (Tallit & Tefilin **are** worn), followed by Maariv.

For the entire duration of the fast it is prohibited to 1) eat and drink 2) wear leather shoes 3) bathe 4) use cosmetic creams and lotions 5) engage in marital relations. One should not sit on a regular-size chair (but rather on a low stool) until mid-day Tuesday. Torah study gladdens the heart and is thus limited to subjects related to Tisha B'Av only. Work and leisure activities should be avoided on Tisha B'Av.