

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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July 2014

Tammuz 5774

### SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting

🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)  
For service times see page 2

11 & 12 July – 14 Tammuz

🕒 Pinchas

🕒 5:13 – 🕒 6:05

18 & 19 July – 21 Tammuz

🕒 Matot

🕒 5:16 – 🕒 6:08

25 & 26 July – 28 Tammuz

🕒 Masei

🕒 5:20 – 🕒 6:11

1 & 2 August – 6 Av

🕒 Devarim (Chazon)

🕒 5:23 – 🕒 6:14

8 & 9 August – 13 Av

🕒 Ve'etchanan (Nachamu)

🕒 5:27 – 🕒 6:17

### CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It's been a bit of a roller coaster month for SA Jewry experiencing the unity and upliftment at the Sinai Indaba to the unity and sadness of the kidnapping and murders in Israel. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families but also to all of Klal Yisroel because all of us are affected in one way or another.

Even though Cecile Hendler requested that I not mention anything in the newsletter, we are obliged to thank Cecile for all her years of selfless service to the Shul. Cecile has decided to retire and we will certainly miss her. We wish her everything of the best.

The Rabbi will be away on leave for the next week or two. We wish him a safe journey and return.

I am getting a sense that attendance at Shul is growing, this is great, keep it up! Please don't forget to a) consider volunteering

to assist with security, b) joining the committee and c) sending us feedback on what you like, dislike or would like to see offered at Oxford. My email address is [brlevy@telkomsa.net](mailto:brlevy@telkomsa.net).

That's really all my news. Have a wonderful month.

Warm regards

Brian

### RABBI'S MESSAGE

On Tuesday 15 July we begin observing a three-week period of mourning, starting with the Fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz and culminating with Tisha Be'Av on 5 August. During this time no marriages take place nor do we have haircuts, to remember the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple many centuries ago.

We spend this time recalling the suffering of our people under foreign siege, and the hardships that our ancestors went through at the hands of a ruthless enemy. We recount our losses, the innocent victims who perished, and the families that were torn apart. We also focus on the spiritual reasons that brought about the devastation and commit ourselves not to repeat the mistakes of that generation.

Tragically, this year it will not take much imagination to picture Israel bleeding. We are all still reeling in pain and shock at the senseless death of three young students, kidnapped and brutally murdered in the Gush Etzion/Chevron area. This year, the Three Weeks of Mourning will reflect that not just historical events—we will be mourning

today's pain, today's losses, today's tragedy.

Yet, in the middle of all this raw pain, we also experienced a beautiful display of unity among Jewish people all around the world. When mourning such tragedy, all differences between us were eclipsed.

Just to mourn, without any positive spin-off, serves no purpose. So during this time we ponder upon the causes for the destruction. The Talmud tells us that the reason Hashem allowed the great tragedy to take place was the spirit of intolerance that existed in the Jewish Community at the time. Sinat Chinam (best translated as causeless hatred) prevailed and divisiveness was the order of the day.

Hence, during this period of sadness we concentrate on healing the divisions that exist within our own community today. We take time out to think of our personal relationships, with our friends, associates, family, and how old ferribles can perhaps be mended. We look at our prejudices, at our lack of tolerance, and see how we can improve in all these areas.

Jewish unity is the only thing that can save us from the terrible plight that we are in currently. Military strength has thus far not succeeded; political efforts have failed dismally. We turn to Hashem in prayer every day and beg Him to send His salvation upon our people. If He sees that we are at peace with each other, He will help us make peace with our enemies.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

## DVAR TORAH

*www.chabad.org*

*There are four things whose creation G-d regrets every day. The first is galut (exile) . . . (Talmud, Sukkah 52b)*

To say that G-d “regrets” something is obviously at odds with our understanding of His omniscience and omnipotence. Regret implies that one now knows something that one did not know before; that one’s earlier decision or deed was flawed or ill-informed; that one has now matured to the point that he can look back and reject a deficient past. None of this, of course, can be related to G-d. In the words of the verse, “G-d is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of Adam that He should regret.”

Attributing regret to G-d represents a further problem: if G-d regrets the creation of something, how could that thing continue to exist? As the chassidic masters explain, creation is a perpetual act on the part of G-d. When the Torah tells us that “G-d said: ‘Let there be light!’ and there was light,” it isn’t describing a one-time event which took place on the first day of creation; it is telling us that what we experience as “light” is the embodiment of G-d’s continued articulation of His desire that there be light. In every fraction of every moment of time, G-d “says” “Let there be light!” and it is this Divine utterance that constitutes the essence of physical light. For no being or phenomenon can possibly exist independently of G-d’s constant involvement in its creation.

[The story is told of a young man who left his hometown for several years to study under the tutelage of chassidic master Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch.

When he returned, one of his friends asked him: “Why did you have to leave your family and community to go study in some distant town? What did you learn in Mezeritch that you couldn’t have learned in our own study halls from our own rabbis?”

“Tell me,” said the young chassid, “do you believe in G-d?”

“Certainly I believe in G-d.”

“If G-d no longer wanted this table to exist, what would happen?”

“What kind of question is that? G-d can do everything! If He no longer wanted this table to exist, He could destroy it immediately.”

“What might He do?”

“What might He do? Whatever He wants! He could send forth a fire and incinerate it on the spot.”

“But if G-d incinerates the table, there would still remain the ashes.”

“G-d can create such a mighty fire that nothing whatsoever would remain.”

“If such is your conception of G-d,” said Rabbi DovBer’s new student, “you might as well throw yourself, together with this god of yours, into that fire. What is this table, if not the embodiment of G-d’s desire that it be? The moment G-d no longer desires its existence, it has no existence!”]

So, if G-d regrets the creation of galut every day, why are we still in exile? How could galut exist, even as a concept, without G-d’s continued desire that it be?

## The Art of Metaphor

Then again, nothing we say about G-d can imply quite the same thing it does when applied to a mortal being. For example, when we say that G-d “hears” our prayers, do we mean that sound waves generated by our vocal chords vibrate a Divine eardrum and stimulate a Divine brain in order for G-d to “hear” our request? Do we even mean that our prayers inform G-d what it is we lack—G-d who knows our every desire before we are ourselves aware of it, indeed before we were born? Obviously not. When we say that G-d hears our prayers, we mean “hear” in a purely conceptual sense—“hear” as in “take notice of” and “pay attention to” and, hopefully, “respond to.”

In discussing G-d, we inevitably use terms whose meaning is colored by the dynamics of our experience—an experience bounded by time, space and our human limitations. Our only other option would be not to speak of G-d at all.<sup>5</sup> So in using these terms, we must always take care to strip them of their mortal trappings and apply only their pure, noncorporeal essence to our understanding of G-d’s relationship to our existence.

Thus, when the Torah tells us that G-d regrets something, it expects us to strip the term “regret” down to its bare conceptual bones: to divest it of all connotations of failing and past ignorance—indeed, of time itself—before applying it to G-d.

Regret, to us, means that something is both desired and not desired—desired in the past, but not desired in the present. Applied to a

timeless G-d, “regret” implies both these states simultaneously: something that is both desired and not desired, with the desire belonging to the more distant dimension of the thing (its “past”), and the non-desire belonging to its more apparent and immediate dimension (its “present”).

This is G-d’s attitude to galut “every day”—including the very day on which He destroyed the Holy Temple and banished us from the Holy Land.

G-d desires galut and does not desire it at the same time. He desires its positive functions—the fortitude it reveals in us, the depths of faith to which it challenges us, its globalization of our mission as His “light unto the nations.” But He abhors its manifest reality—the physical suffering and spiritual displacement to which it subjects us. Upon our ultimate deliverance from exile, the positive essence of galut will come to light—but then, of course, we shall no longer be in a state of galut. Galut, by definition, is a state in which the externalities of life obscure its inner content. Thus, the state of galut is a state of “regret”: a state whose non-desirable element is manifest and “present,” while its desirable aspect is “in the past”—distant and obscured.

And since a thing’s “existence” is the expression of a Divine desire that it be, the state of galut exists only in a very limited sense—only inasmuch as G-d desires it. Only its “desired” element possesses true existence; its “not desired” element, despite its ostensibly greater, more “present” reality, is a nonentity, nothing more than

the illusionary shadow of its truly real, though presently obscured, positive function.

#### Two Lessons

Today, galut is no longer what it used to be. Although we still suffer the spiritual rootlessness of galut, its more blatant expressions are fading away: today, a Jew can live practically anywhere in the world in freedom and prosperity.

But to feel comfortable in galut is the greatest galut there can be, the ultimate symptom of alienation from one’s essence and source. To feel comfortable in galut—to perceive it as a viable, even desirable, state of affairs—is to live in contradiction to G-d’s daily regret of galut. The Jew who lives in harmony with G-d will always regard the galut state as abhorrent and undesirable.

At the same time, we know that galut, devoid of all but the faintest echo of Divine desire, possesses no true reality, no matter how formidable a face it may represent to us. We understand that it is ever poised on the brink of dissolution; that at any moment, its desirable essence can manifest itself and banish the galut “reality” to the regretted past that it is.

#### SHACHARIT (A.M.)

<b>Sunday and Public Holidays</b>	8:00
<b>Monday to Friday</b>	7:15
<b>Shabbat &amp; Festivals</b>	9:00

15/07 (Fast of 17 Tammuz): 7:00  
26/07 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00  
05/08 (Fast of 9 Av): 7:00

#### MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

<b>Sunday to Thursday</b>	5:15
<b>from 28/07</b>	5:30
15/07 (Fast of 17 Tammuz): 5:00	
05/08 (Fast of 9 Av): 5:15	
<b>Friday</b>	5:20
<b>Shabbat</b>	5:00

## GOOD GRIEF

By Yanky Tauber

*There is nothing as whole as a broken heart.*

*Chassidic saying*

*Depression is not a sin; but what depression does, no sin can do.*

*Chassidic saying*

Is sad bad? Chassidic teaching differentiates between two types of sorrow: merirut, a constructive grief, and atzvut, a destructive grief. Merirut is the distress of one who not only recognizes his failings but also cares about them; one who agonizes over the wrongs he has committed, over his missed opportunities, over his unrealized potential; one who refuses to become indifferent to what is deficient in himself and his world. Atzvut is the distress of one who has despaired of himself and his fellow man, whose melancholy has drained him of hope and initiative. Merirut is a springboard for self-improvement; atzvut is a bottomless pit.

How does one distinguish between the two? The first is active, the second—passive. The first one weeps, the second’s eyes are dry and blank. The first one’s mind and heart are in turmoil, the second’s are still with apathy and heavy as lead. And what happens when it passes, when they emerge from their respective bouts of grief? The first one springs to action: resolving, planning, taking his first faltering steps to undo the causes of his sorrow. The second one goes to sleep

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BAR/BAT- MITZVAH**

- Clive and Rhona Gilbert on the Barmitzvah of their grandson, Daniel Gilbert, on 31<sup>st</sup> July.

- Rabbi & Rivky Chaikin on their daughter Ita's Bat-Mitzvah on 6<sup>th</sup> July

**BIRTHS**

- Annette Wolk on the birth of a great-granddaughter.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Rebecca Flekser on her 94<sup>th</sup> birthday on 10<sup>th</sup> July
- Solly Jossel on his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 27<sup>th</sup> July

**REFUAH SHLEMAH**

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:



- Dawn Nates
- Lily Elsbach
- Connie Meyerowitz
- Doreen Kapeluschnik
- Gertie Feinstein
- Sandra Sher
- Sybil Pollack



## PURCHASE A LEAF ON OUR "SIMCHA TREE"

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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*