

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

July 2018

Tammuz/Av 5778

### SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting

🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)

*For service times see page 3*

6 & 7 July – 24 Tammuz

🕒 Pinchas

🕒 5:11 – 6:03

13 & 14 July – 2 Av

🕒 Matot & Masei

🕒 5:14 – 🕒 6:06

20 & 21 July – 9 Av

🕒 Devarim (Chazon)

🕒 5:17 – 🕒 6:09

27 & 28 July – 16 Av

🕒 Va'etchanan (Nachamu)

🕒 5:21 – 🕒 6:12

3 & 4 August – 23 Av

🕒 Eikev

🕒 5:24 – 🕒 6:15

### RABBI'S MESSAGE

There is an old Tisha B'Av custom to throw around thistles, which stick on people's clothes. It has been suggested that the origin of the practice is to add to the misery of the people by causing them to have to remove the thorns from their clothing. One Tisha B'Av, in Rizhin, the children were taking great delight in this custom, collecting bags full of thistles, having contests to see who could hit the most targets and then

watching gleefully as the adults tried to dislodge them. The Rabbi of Rizhin, displeased with this merriment, inappropriate for the saddest day on our calendar, raised his eyes to Heaven. "Master of the Universe," he said, "You have given Your children a day, but they have no clue how to observe it properly. You should therefore take it from them."

During the next couple of weeks, we engage in various stages of grieving for the loss of the Temple. Beginning on the Fast of 17 Tammuz (which we observed on 1 July) until Tisha B'Av (22 July) we observe a period of mourning. On Rosh Chodesh Av (13 July) the process intensifies, and further restrictions apply during the week of Tisha B'Av itself.

Sadness and lamenting is not a natural process for us. Jews are a joyous people, and our calendar is filled with happy

occasions and Chagim. When it comes to bereavement and melancholy, we are not quite sure how to go about it. We go through the motions, but our heart is not in it. As we observe the laws of the Three Weeks, the Nine Days and the Week of Tisha B'Av our hearts are filled with the hope that this is the last time ever we will mourn for the Temple.

We can only join in the prayer of the Rabbi of Rizhin. Hashem, you have given us a time period in the calendar that we do not know how to handle. Please take the whole thing away from us. Send us Mashiach, rebuild our Temple. Then we will no longer need to fast on the 17th of Tammuz, or on Tisha B'Av. These days will turn from mourning and sadness to rejoicing and happiness. May it be Your will that it happens this year still.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

**FROM THE REBBETZIN**

One evening, about two weeks ago, as I was opening my gate, I saw through the back of my head (yes I am a mom and teacher so I have eyes in the back of my head) how a neighbour's guest was struggling to reverse out of our driveway. Going at a bad angle she repeatedly ran over the little flower bed on the pavement.

In the morning on the way out again I showed Ita how the plants had been crushed and broken the night before.

Each day since then I have looked at this flower bed with fascination. How resilient these plants are. Many have rejuvenated and are growing as though they were never harmed. Amazing!

But even more amazing to me are the ones that couldn't keep growing as normal, and so are growing differently now... facing a different direction, or without one branch or leaning on a rock, but all growing nevertheless.

I think this is the story of life. How many times we will be "run over " by other people, by circumstance, by health, by money or any thing else that can squash us down. And our trick has to be to get up and grow.

Sometimes it takes just a few days to regrow back to normal and sometimes we have to adjust to the new situation, grow differently. But always we have to stay part of the flower bed!

Wishing you a good month.

Rivky

**DVAR TORAH****REGRET**

(meaningfullife.com)

*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.<sup>4</sup> 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. 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.”<sup>6</sup> 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.

### SERVICE TIMES

#### SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
<small>13/07 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00</small>	
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00

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

Sunday to Thursday	5:15
Friday	5:20
Shabbat	5:00

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Rabbi Yossi & Rivky Chaikin and Tzviki & Chaya Wolvovsly on the birth of a grand-daughter and daughter in New York.
- Sharon Margo on the birth of a grand-daughter.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Eric Mausenbaum on his 80th birthday on the 5<sup>th</sup> July
- Denis Segal on his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 5<sup>th</sup> July.
- Alan Lieberman on his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 9<sup>th</sup> July
- Stanley Wolpe on his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on the 13<sup>th</sup> July.
- Isidore Bronstein on his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on the 15<sup>th</sup> July.
- Lilian Benard on her 25<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 26<sup>th</sup> July.
- Tanya Kramer on her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 28<sup>th</sup> July.

**BEREAVEMENTS**

We wish long life to

- Avrielle Metzger on the death of her husband Ian.
- Marke & Jeanette Markovitz on the death of their grandson Joseph.
- Lewis Goldblatt on the death of his wife Maureen.

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

**Provisional\* Schedule****Shabbat Chazon (9 Av/25 July):**

- 🕒 9:00 a.m. Shacharit
- Brocha after the service, followed by Cholent*
- 🕒 12:30 p.m. Mincha
- 🕒 5:35 p.m. Fast begins
- 🕒 6:09 p.m. Shabbat ends
- 🕒 7:00 p.m. Maariv, followed by reading of Eicha (Lamentations)
- 🕒 7:30 p.m.: "The Power to Yield" - Video Presentation by the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation

**Tisha B'Av (10 Av/26 July—delayed observance):**

- 🕒 8:00 a.m.: Shacharit: followed by Kinnot (Tallit & Tefilin are **not** worn)
- 🕒 5:00 p.m.: Mincha (Tallit & Tefilin are worn), followed by Maariv.
- 🕒 6:02 p.m.: Fast ends

*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 Sunday. 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.*

**\* This programme will be followed only if (G-d forbid) we are not privileged to experience the Messianic revelation. In that case, Tisha B'Av will be observed as a holiday.**