

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER July 2019

Tammuz 5779

### SHABBAT TIMES

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

12 & 13 July – 10 Tammuz

🔊 Chukat

🕯 5:14 – 🕯 6:06

19 & 20 July – 17 Tammuz

🔊 Balak

🕯 5:17 – 🕯 6:09

26 & 27 July – 24 Tammuz

🔊 Pinchas

🕯 5:20 – 🕯 6:12

2 & 3 August – 2 Av

🔊 Matot-Masei

🕯 5:24 – 🕯 6:15

9 & 10 August – 9 Av

🔊 Devarim

🕯 5:27 – 🕯 6:18

### RABBI'S MESSAGE

WhatsApp was down last Wednesday. What a disaster for grandparents! Well, it was not actually totally down. Text messages were still being sent and delivered. But no files could be downloaded. This means that our fix of daily photos of our grandchildren in various parts of the globe were just not forthcoming. Turns out it was not just WhatsApp that was not performing; social platforms Facebook and Instagram were likewise not firing on all

cylinders. The joke going around was that, for one evening, people would actually have to talk to one another face to face rather than communicate via the Internet.

Social media come under so much criticism nowadays. They are seen as the cause of many ills, time wasted and the reason why many are dissatisfied with their own lot as they follow the lives of the lucky and glorious online.

On Shabbat 3 Tammuz (6 July) we marked the 25th yartzeit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. In the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a young girl approached him to ask if he thought that atomic energy was a good or a bad thing. The Rebbe likened this to the knives which could be found in the kitchen of her home. Were these good or bad? Clearly this depends on what one intends to do with the knives. In the kitchen these are useful tools but obviously a sharp knife can be used with malevolent intent. Likewise with nuclear energy which had

been used for destructive purposes but can also be (and has since become) an important source of energy.

This was the Rebbe's outlook on life. Everything can be used in a positive way. Early in the 1970's the Rebbe's talks were broadcast over transatlantic telephone lines so they could be heard simultaneously in other Chabad centres around the world. (The talks, known as "farbrengens" usually began at 9:30 p.m. New York time and I remember, in my youth, getting up in the middle night to listen to the live hook up at 3:30 a.m., Brussels time.)

In the 1980's, as satellite television began its expansion, the broadcasts extended to video in addition to audio. When the Internet began reaching every household in the following decade, the first organisation to use this tool to spread Torah was Chabad in Cyberspace (now known as [chabad.org](http://chabad.org)).

Is the Internet kosher? We all know that the

majority of the content found online is not exactly glatt kosher. But the same can be said of satellite television, which saw the introduction of multiple channels into every home, many of which broadcast immorality and other unsuitable programming. Likewise with the telephone, which enabled the transmission of lashon hara beyond one's immediate circle.

Are those technologies therefore inherently treif? Just like the knives in our kitchens, it depends what we do with it.

In this decade, WhatsApp has become the communication tool of choice. No doubt much of the content spread over this medium is not kosher. But the potential for good is there and must be utilized. Personally, in addition to many pics and clips of the grandchildren, I also receive dozens of Torah related text messages, audio shiurim and video clips, every single day.

Sure, today's proliferation of social media can be a source of many ills. But it can also be a hugely effective tool for spreading kindness, goodness and the word of G-d. It is up to us.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

## FROM THE REBBETZIN

On Friday afternoon my husband got a message from his phone 'call your mom'. How creepy is that? I know that our phones keep track of us and what we do! The location allows them to "know" where we are, to offer us to rate the restaurant we have just patronised, to compare prices with the dentist we have just visited or buy discounted tickets to a place we have mentioned. But teaching us manners and how to behave, now that is a whole new level. (I am curious to know if every time my husband calls me it is because his phone sends him a 'call your wife' message.)

When I was a little girl in cheder, our teacher told us that we should live our lives as if we were being watched all the time. At the time, this idea was so foreign and difficult to imagine. It became easier and easier to understand as surveillance cameras became popular and a 'big brother' reality type show became more normal. But I always thought I could "protect" myself. I like to think I live a private life, I can live and do what I want to. (I don't have surveillance cameras, nor do I plan to go on any TV show).

The Talmud tells us, that Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai's parting blessing to his students was 'may you

fear G-d as much as you fear humans.'

When we realise that no matter what, we are being watched, we are not private citizens in our own bubble. We can be tracked, there are computer programs that are figuring out all day what our preferences are in clothes, money, food etc., we have families who need to be called... It is then easier to remind ourselves that G-d too is watching our every move, instructing us how and when and what to do and holding us accountable for everything.

We are not private citizens. It is not just Google who is watching, it is the King himself. So call your mom, or daughter or a friend. Behave as you are supposed to.

Have a good month

*Rivky*

## SERVICE TIMES

### SHACHARIT (A.M.)

**Sunday & Public Holidays** 8:00

*02/08 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00*

**Monday to Friday** 7:15

**Shabbat & Festivals** 9:00

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

**Sunday to Thursday** 5:15

*from 04/08* 5:30

**Friday** 5:20

*from 09/09* 5:30

**Shabbat** 5:00

**DVAR TORAH****THE 17<sup>th</sup> OF TAMMUZ***(chabad.org)*

The fast of the 17th of the Hebrew month of Tammuz, known as Shivah Asar B'Tammuz, is the start of a three-week mourning period for the destruction of Jerusalem and the two Holy Temples.

The fast actually commemorates five tragic events that occurred on this date:

- 1) Moses broke the tablets when he saw the Jewish people worshipping the Golden Calf.
- 2) During the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, the Jews were forced to cease offering the daily sacrifices due to the lack of sheep.
- 3) Apostomos burned the holy Torah.
- 4) An idol was placed in the Holy Temple.
- 5) The walls of Jerusalem were breached by the Romans, in 69 CE, after a lengthy siege. (Three weeks later, after the Jews put up a valiant struggle, the Romans destroyed the second Holy Temple on the 9th of Av.)

The Jerusalem Talmud maintains that this is also the date when the Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem on

their way to destroying the first Temple.

Practically speaking:

Healthy adults—bar- or bat-mitzvah age and older—abstain from eating or drinking between dawn and nightfall.

Pregnant and nursing women may not have to fast. Someone who is ill should consult with a rabbi. Even those exempt from fasting, such as ill people or children, shouldn't indulge in delicacies or sweets.

It is permitted to wake up early before the fast begins and eat, provided that prior to going to sleep one had in mind to do so.

During the morning prayers we recite selichot (penitential prayers), printed in the back of the prayerbook. The "long Avinu Malkeinu" is recited during the morning and afternoon prayers.

The Torah is read during the morning and afternoon prayers. The reading—the same for both morning and afternoon—is Exodus 32:11–14 and 34:1–10, which discusses the aftermath of the Golden Calf incident, how Moses successfully interceded on the Israelites' behalf and attained forgiveness for their sin. After the afternoon Torah reading, the special fast-day haftarah, Isaiah 55:6–56:8, is read.

During the Amidah prayer of the afternoon service (Minchah), those who are fasting add the paragraph Aneinu in the Shema Koleinu blessing. (It is also added in the cantor's repetition of the Amidah in both the morning and afternoon services, as its own blessing between the blessings of Re'eh and Refa'einu.) Additionally, the priestly blessing is also added in the repetition of the Amidah in the afternoon service.

If the 17th of Tammuz falls on Shabbat, the fast is postponed until Sunday.

Abstaining from food and drink is the external element of a fast day. On a deeper level, a fast day is an auspicious day, a day when G-d is accessible, waiting for us to repent.

The sages explain: "Every generation for which the Temple is not rebuilt, it is as though the Temple was destroyed for that generation." A fast day is not only a sad day, but an opportune day. It's a day when we are empowered to fix the cause of that destruction, so that our long exile will be ended and we will find ourselves living in messianic times; may that be very soon.

*The 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz this year is on 21 July. The fast begins at 5:40 a.m. and ends at 5:54 p.m.*

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Gila & Moshe Tobias and Gerald & Shoshana Kaplan on the birth of a grand-daughter.

**BARMITZVAH**

- Gary & Tamsyn Rutstein, Theo Rutstein and Shelley Rutstein on

the barmitzvah of their son and grandson, Eric.

**MARRIAGES**

- Marion Rapp on the marriage of her grand-daughter Alexa to Gabi Bender.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Stanley Wolpe on his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday on the 13<sup>th</sup> July.
- Isidore Bronstein on his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday on the 15<sup>th</sup> July.

**REFUAH SHLEIMA**

We wish a speedy recovery to:

- Alan Norman

**BEREAVEMENTS**

- We wish long life to Tammy Levine, David Manne and Jeanette Byala on the death of their mother Esther Manne.

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

**Jewish Community Survey of SA**

**Have your say**

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*Kaplan Centre*  
JEWISH STUDIES



Have you completed the Jewish Survey of SA yet?

Go to [www.jcssa.co.za](http://www.jcssa.co.za)

**TO HAVE YOUR SAY TODAY!**

The survey was endorsed by the Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, Chief Rabbi of South Africa. "This survey is an important tool to help us understand our community better so that we plan for the future. Let's all participate so that the information gathered can be a true reflection of our community."