

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER July 2020

Tammuz & Av 5780

### SHABBAT TIMES

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

10 & 11 July – 19 Tammuz

🔊 Pinchas

🕯 5:13 – 🕯 6:05

17 & 18 July – 26 Tammuz

🔊 Matot & Masei

🕯 5:16 – 🕯 6:08

24 & 25 July – 4 Av

🔊 Devarim (Chazon)

🕯 5:20 – 🕯 6:11

31 July & 1 August – 11 Av

🔊 Va'etchanan (Nachamu)

🕯 5:23 – 🕯 6:14

7 & 8 August – 18 Av

🔊 Re'eh

🕯 5:27 – 🕯 6:17

### RABBI'S MESSAGE

It seems that, for now at least, our shuls are going to remain closed. Naively, we all thought that this would be for just a few weeks, until the troubles passed. The weeks have now turned to months, and the number of new cases reported daily are increasing at an alarming rate. Hence, despite the law now allowing for religious gatherings in places of worship, South Africa's synagogues will not be opening until the dreaded spike is over and there are fewer new infections reported each day.

We are now entering the most dangerous phase of this pandemic, here in Gauteng, and I can only beg for caution from all of you. The fact that government had to relax some of the lockdown restrictions does not mean it is safer now—these decisions were based solely on economic necessity. Sadly, our community is struggling to sustain safe practices with people visiting, socialising and going to one another for Shabbat meals. Everyone rationalises that they are only engaging with a limited number of people and taking necessary precautions. This, as numbers are rising frighteningly within our Jewish (and Oxford) community. Please be safe. Throwing caution to the wind endangers you, your immediate family and all those with whom you come into contact (and those they will subsequently be exposed to).

Yes, we are missing Shul. For now, Shul has moved into our homes. A shul is a place where we gather to pray, study, socialise and of course, eat. All of those are religious functions (even the food!) We now have to transplant this into our respective abodes.

There is no substitute for congregational prayer. Yet, davening in one's own home and at one's own pace is a most uplifting experience. I urge you to keep up the level of prayer that you are accustomed to, or even increase at a time when we need to implore G-d more than ever for salvation. If you do not have a Siddur in your home, please contact the office and we will arrange to loan you one. And of course we broadcast the services directly into your home on [zoom.oxfordshul.com](http://zoom.oxfordshul.com)—make sure to join in the Friday afternoon (4:00 p.m.) Erev Shabbat service for some communal singing and a sermon, as well as on other occasions during the week.

Keep up with the Torah portion on a weekly basis. A short summary appears in the Oxfordian, with a page reference to the full text in a number of editions of the Chumash. Once again, we are able to loan you a copy of the Artscroll edition while we are closed for services. Zoom also brings Torah into your home. There is our weekly shiur on a Wednesday night as well as numerous other opportunities to study Torah in the comfort of your own home.

Zoom has also allowed our community to interact socially, with the schmoozing that happens before and after services and shiurim. No talking during shul, thanks to the “Mute All” function that the app offers (I think I may miss that when real services resume ☺). We also have a social WhatsApp group where our community interacts and you are welcome to join this one—contact us to add you or click <https://chat.whatsapp.com/FXdglzbhpOEEyiltCezQWT> from your smartphone.

The one thing we cannot Zoom to you is a brocha (although we made a plan for Shavuot!) But on Shabbat morning, make sure you have a little extra and let us all join together in a l’chaim.

Please stay safe, sane, and healthy. And please, stay home.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

## SERVICE TIMES

*For our safety, all Shul services are currently suspended. We hope and pray for their resumption.*

### SHACHARIT (A.M.)

<b>Sunday &amp; Public Holidays</b>	8:00
09/07 (Fast of 17 Tammuz): 7:00	
22/07 & 24/07 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00	
30/07 (Fast of 9 Av): 7:00	
<b>Monday to Friday</b>	7:15
<b>Shabbat &amp; Festivals</b>	9:00

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

<b>Sunday to Thursday</b>	5:15
09/07 (Fast of 17 Tammuz): 5:00	
<b>from 02/08</b>	5:30
<b>Friday</b>	5:20
<b>from 07/08</b>	5:30
<b>Shabbat</b>	5:00

## FROM THE REBBETZIN

Yesterday I looked with sympathy at my fancy glasses cabinet. Since the beginning of lockdown I have not used my good salad bowls or platters. In fact at the end of Pesach I apologised silently to the dishes that had waited a whole year to be used, and will now have to wait another whole year for their turn to grace our table.

One of the changes during these last few months has been living simpler. We are dressing simpler, and eating simpler. I wonder if we will ever wear lipstick again, as it seems we will be wearing masks for a long time to come.

One of the things that has made me feel so blessed during this strange time is Shabbos. It puts focus into our week. It gives us structure and purpose.

On Wednesday I plan and shop for shabbos as usual. On Friday it continues to be an extra busy day with cooking and cleaning. We have Zoom Shul and get ready for shabbos.

How special it is that even without guests our table is set with a white tablecloth, challa, and our shabbos cutlery and crockery. We dress in shabbos clothes. We use the silver jug for water.

I am sorry for the unused salad bowls and platters, and look very forward to the time when we are together with friends and family again, but meanwhile thank Hashem for the gift of Shabbos. I will try to keep it special, since more than we have kept Shabbos, Shabbos has kept us.

Wishing you all a good month.

May Hashem watch over us all and keep us safe and healthy.

*Rivky*

## DVAR TORAH

### FINDING THE G-D SPOT

*by Rabbi Eli DeutschLevy  
(aish.com)*

### Rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem – and within ourselves.

The Temple is like a spiritual hotspot. Just as there are hotspots that receive satellite beams and activate your laptop's internet, so too, there are G-d spots – spots that access G-d-perception and activate the soul.

Imagine an advanced satellite whose beams exist equally in all places. But to access those beams you need a receiving device. Similarly, G-d is equally “present” in all places. The difference between a regular spot and a G-d spot is in our ability to dial in to G-d's presence.

This is what makes a place holy. It's not that G-d is more in that place than any other place – that would imply physical limits to G-d. Rather, the holy place is a location inherently more susceptible to G-d-consciousness and matters of the soul.

The Hebrew name for the Temple is the Beit Hamikdash – translated literally as The Holy House – it is the G-d spot. But just as the Temple is holy, i.e. a place of G-d-perception and experience, Jewish mysticism teaches that each of us can make ourselves into a mini-Temple – a mini G-d spot – by being like a temple. At that

point, G-d “dwells” (i.e. is perceived and experienced) within each one of us just as G-d “dwells” within the Temple. And similar to the manner in which people would go to the Temple in Jerusalem for a G-d experience, they can get a piece of that just by meeting up with you for a cup of coffee.

### **Building Our Temple**

For many of us, this idea sounds distant. How can I be a mini-Temple? Do you have any idea where I have been and what I have done?

No matter where you are, each of us has as our true essence a G-dly soul that we can always reconnect to. So turning into a G-d spot may not be that far off after all.

Think of something you do that is goodly or G-dly – even the smallest thing. Perhaps you are giving, a real “people person.” Perhaps you have good organization skills. Perhaps you are disciplined, or good at fixing things. Since your essence is a soul, a spark of the Infinite, it is impossible that this not be reflected somewhere in your life. If you’re having a tough time finding anything goodly or G-dly, it just means you have to keep searching. It is impossible that a soul not show its true self.

It’s true that we may have done things we are not all that proud of, but if we look inside we discover that this is not really who we are at our core.

Once you have found a single G-dly aspect within yourself, note that this is the real you.

The negative stuff, no matter how strong it is, doesn’t reflect the essence of who you are.

It’s a distraction and deviation from your true self. (Of course, the intent here is not to absolve anyone from responsibility for their negative actions. We are responsible for every choice we make. But realize those negative actions do not truly reflect the person’s G-dly essence.)

The moment you come to terms with this, you judge yourself differently – and favorably – and you let go. You can start to notice more good points about yourself. And gradually you align your consciousness with the perspective that the mistakes and mis-moves you have made are not the real you. This helps give you the confidence to change your course of action and live more in sync with your soul. And the more you do that, the more you become a G-d Spot, a person who reflects G-dliness in the world. That’s what it means to become a mini-temple.

### **Searching for Myself**

With the loss of the Temple, the focal point of piercing clarity has faded. As the beacon of light dims, confusion and darkness increases. The world’s source of inspiration and experience of self-awareness has

become a memory. But there is still the spark of hope...

It is specifically during this deepest darkness – this spiritual midnight – that we search out a point of light in ourselves from which to build. After all, if I can find a point of goodness and G-dliness even in the most difficult and darkest of circumstances, I can grab a hold of that, strengthen it, reinforce it, and build myself up from there.

And the same applies to the world.

When we are experiencing times of difficulties, hardships, and dangers, it is easy to fall into a sense of despair. It is easy to feel abandoned and alone. However, if I can hone in on one spark of clarity and G-dliness; if I can find one aspect of my life or one time in my life in which I experienced a “spot” of G-d, I can draw strength from that to not only carry on, but to look deeper into other areas of my life and find a spot of G-d there too.

As we take on this way of living and gain this perspective, we build the world back up to the time when we all merit to see the return of the G-d spot, the Temple in Jerusalem.

May it be soon!

*During the the three weeks linking the the Fast of 17 Tammuz (Thursday 9 July) and the Fast of 9 Av (Thursday 30 July) we mourn the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Holy Temple.*

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal  
Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Yehuda & Batsheva Glick and Rabbi & Rivky Chaikin on the birth of a son and grandson in Maryland, USA.
- Raymond & Hilary Isakow on the birth of a granddaughter in Washington.
- Clive & Carole Strimling on the birth of a grandson in Melbourne.
- Reg & Della Berkowitz on the birth of a great grandson in London.

**MARRIAGES**

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the wedding of their grandson Eliezer Moshel to Chava Turteltaub in Melbourne, Australia.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Anthony Fobel on his 55<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 5<sup>th</sup> July.
- Mervyn Smith on his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 5<sup>th</sup> July.
- Stanley Wolpe on his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday on the 13<sup>th</sup> July
- Isidore Bronstein on his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday on the 15<sup>th</sup> July.
- Donald Krausz on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 17<sup>th</sup> July

**REFUAH SHLEIMA**

We wish a  
Speedy  
recovery to:

- Albert Epstein
- Bernard Chipkin
- Theo Rutstein

**BEREAVEMENTS**

- We wish long life to Norma Wolpe on the death of her sister, Thelma Drobis.
- We wish long life to Barney Gordon on the death of his wife, Marion.
- We wish long life to Debby & Mark Meltzer on the death of their father and father-in-law, Aubrey Lapidus.

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

**STAY HOME.**  
**STAY SAFE. SAVE LIVES.**