

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

July 2023

Tammuz/Av 5783

SHABBAT TIMES

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

14 & 15 July – 26 Tammuz

🔊 Matot & Masei

🕯 5:15 – 🕯 6:07

21 & 22 July – 4 Av

🔊 Devarim

🕯 5:18 – 🕯 6:10

28 & 29 July – 11 Av

🔊 Ve'etchanan

🕯 5:21 – 🕯 6:13

4 & 5 August – 18 Av

🔊 Eikev

🕯 5:25 – 🕯 6:16

RABBI'S MESSAGE

The highlight of our recent visit to the USA last month was obviously the time we spent with family: the children, grandchildren, my siblings and my parents. Every minute together made every cent spent on travel and every minute of the hardship of a 16-hour flight worth it.

Parking in Brooklyn is an absolute disaster and I therefore prefer to rely on Uber to get around. It also turns out more economical. However, I did end up renting a vehicle for a couple of days, to cover some longer distances. During this 48-hour period we drove to a grandson's upsherin near Washington, DC, my nephew's engagement in Teaneck, NJ and the

Rebbe's Ohel in Queens—over 600 miles in the car, equalling the duration of a long-haul flight. Anticipating this, I had booked a higher-end car model, which would take some of the edge off the long distance travel.

Avis provided us with a beauty of a vehicle, a Honda Passport SUV with less than 100 miles on the odometer at pick-up. Rentals in the USA come standard with many luxury and safety features, which take years to reach us here in SA. The one I really enjoyed was ACC ("Adaptive Cruise Control"). For those unfamiliar with the feature, it is the same as the standard cruise control, allowing the driver to set a speed of choice which the car automatically maintains. In addition, the computer constantly monitors the pace of the vehicle ahead and should traffic conditions necessitate slowing down, it will do so without driver intervention.

It was an absolute game changer and it relieved a lot of stress. The busy thruways traversing the States of New Jersey and Maryland are packed with vehicles of all sizes and shapes driving at various speeds. ACC even accounts for discourteous drivers who will think nothing of cutting off a fellow highway user. And another

form of stress. I frequently have a passenger with me, who is a notorious back seat driver. Her mantra, when we are on a busy highway, is the repeated warning, "you are now driving faster than the car in front of you." With the feature enabled, I was able to politely and calmly respond, "this is impossible, the car computer will not let me do that." This was good for both our stress levels and obviously for Shalom Bayit.

My car back home is equipped with cruise control, but not the adaptive type. On the highway, I will set it at what I deem a safe speed, but aggravate when an inconsiderate driver hogs the passing lane, forcing me to manually (and reluctantly) disable the control.

From my two days with this Honda SUV, I also learnt an important life lesson. So often I set my sights on an objective ahead. I plan both the route and the pace to get there. Inevitably obstacles will get in the way—people or circumstances. I need to learn to be adaptive as I carry on about life. Sometimes this may mean slowing down a bit; sometimes this may involve changing lanes. As long as the destination is eventually reached, best not to stress or aggravate.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I made a spontaneous decision to travel. Me, who usually finds every excuse to stay home, suddenly decided to join my husband on his in-and-out trip to the USA to visit the family, some of who, we had not not seen for a year. (Still have not seen the Australian branch for even longer.)

It was an incredible, intense week. We utilised every moment. We did not even make time for shopping, which is just as well as the Rand does not really allow for much of that anyway.

Baruch Hashem, the time with our family was incredible. It has been a real injection of love and gratitude. I cannot stop thanking Hashem for the blessings he has given us.

Jewish practice is to publicly thank Hashem when He does something great for you. Last night I was thinking about this and felt an even deeper level of gratitude. Thank you Hashem for allowing me to realise that I am blessed.

All so often we concentrate on the difficult things in our lives. Our worries weigh us down. Sometimes we walk around kvetching or outright complaining about things or circumstances that are not exactly the way we want, or the way we like, or the way we dreamt. But this week in the USA made me concentrate on the good, the happy and the blessings in my life. For this especially, I thank you Hashem. May we all have only and plenty of blessings for which to thank Him.

Have a happy month.

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

The Fast of 17 Tammuz was on 6 July. The 9th of Av will be on 27th July. During the three weeks that link these two sad days, we concentrate on the loss of the Holy Temples and our current Exile.

PRISONERS OF HOPE

by Miriam Kosman
(aish.com)

In direct proportion to our yearning do we experience the joy of re-connection.

Ever hear that you are not supposed to cry over spilt milk? Why do the Jews sit there on the floor every year on the ninth of Av, mourning the Destruction of the Temple that happened eons ago? And while, “they lived happily ever after” is a great ending for a children’s story, we cynical adults smirk at the thought. We’ve been around long enough to know there are no happy endings, so what is this naïve hoping for Messiah?

And it’s not like this hoping is a take-it-or-leave-it footnote to Judaism, either. Maimonides lists belief in the coming of Messiah as one of the Thirteen Principles of Faith. Why is it so fundamental?

A Life of Longing

Getting beyond the cynicism to yearn for Messiah means I understand there is a game plan. Life is not an endless flipping of calendar pages, emerging out of nothingness and hurtling straight towards more nothingness.

There was a beginning – the Exodus from Egypt – and there will be an end, a time when we reclaim the relationship of love that started then. During the long middle of this story, we hold on to the vision we were shown at Sinai, hold on to it for dear life. We experienced that love once, and forever more we yearn for it.

It’s like the wife of a famous refusenik who was allowed out of the former Soviet Union years before her husband. During those years, there was not a day that she didn’t spend agitating for her husband’s release. She was living in the free world – surely she ate and slept during those years, perhaps she went shopping occasionally, but her entire existence was defined by her yearning to reunite with her husband.

We are told that after death, we will be asked, “Tzipita Lyeshua?” “Did you yearn for redemption?” G-d will say: I missed you so much. Did you miss Me? Did you wait

every day for Me to return? Did you agonize over My absence? And it will be in direct proportion to our yearning that we experience the joy of re-connection. If we don't mind that You are there, and we are here, we betray the intimacy of our experience at Sinai.

Yes, we have lives to live, jobs to do – and of course, we live our lives joyfully. But through it all, the Jew never forgets that there is something missing. Even at a wedding, moments before we break into song and dance, we shatter a glass to remind us that though this wedding is a joyous glimpse of the unity of the future – there will always be a corner in our heart that refuses to be reconciled with Your absence. A part of us will always ache for You.

Recognizing the Jail

Rabbeinu Yonah, (d. 1263) in his classic book, Shaarei Teshuva, cites a midrash:

The king sentenced some bandits to imprisonment. Once in prison, the prisoners managed to dig themselves a tunnel to freedom. Most of them took the opportunity to escape but one stayed behind. The jailer comes in and beats the remaining prisoner. "The way is open

before you! Why have you not escaped?"

We can imagine the prisoner protesting, "Wait a minute! Go find the escapees and beat them. What are you yelling at me for? I am the good one who stayed where you put me!"

And the jailer would respond, "No! It is you by staying here, who have betrayed freedom. You are the problem! The others realized they were in jail; they took the first opportunity to escape. You, by staying put, have declared that you are comfortable with the way things are. You've negated the jail!"

We cheerfully sit around in exile and we decorate the cell, we pipe in some music – we're having a grand old time.

"I will remove your heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh," Ezekiel says. But who needs a heart of flesh? A heart of stone is much more comfortable. Who wants to care so much? Who wants to mourn? Who wants to be so aware of what we are missing? Get with the program! Put that smile back on your face and get back on the dance floor! Yet, sometimes it is pain and mourning for what was that peels us off our infatuation with the superficial and forces us to

dig deeper for the source of real joy.

So G-d makes exile a little less comfortable. We notice it's getting hotter and we run to adjust the air conditioning. We're okay. We've got it. Everything is under control.

G-d waits. He waits for us to notice that we are in prison. He waits for us to let the pain catapult us into His arms.

The prophet Zecharia calls us Asirie Tikva – "prisoners of hope". Being in a constant state of hope and longing is a hard way to live. It's difficult to live in this world like strangers in a strange land. We never totally fit in, never completely feel at home. Everyone else is dancing to the music, doing just fine. Only we (even while dancing) have our eyes pinned to the door, bound by love, with ropes of hope to another world, another reality. Yet when that reality arrives, it is all those years of yearning – those years of mourning what was, and years of hope for the future – which will bind us to the Source of all Joy.

SERVICE TIMES SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Monday & Thursday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Friday	5:20
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MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHDAYS

- Alan Lieberman on the occasion of his 65th birthday on the 9th July.
- Donald Krausz on the occasion of his 93rd birthday on the 17th July.

- Lilian Benard on the occasion of her 30th birthday on the 26th July.

MARRIAGES

- June Berger on the marriage of her grandson Daniel Reich to Ita Leah Zibbel in New York on 1st August

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Stanley Kaplan

**BEREAVEMENTS**

We wish long life to:

- The family of Cecile on her death.
- Leonie Selvan and family on the death of her father, Willie Wittert

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

**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 R720 for the first plaque ordered, R540 for subsequent plaques

SPONSOR A BROCHA

at the Shul on the occasion of a personal or family Simcha, to commemorate a Yartzeit, birthday or anniversary.

For details and bookings contact the Shul office

