

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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June 2014

Sivan 5774

SHABBAT TIMES

🔊 Parasha - 🕯 Candle Lighting

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

20 & 21 June - 23 Sivan

🔊 Korach

🕯 5:06 – 🕯 5:58

27 & 28 June - 30 Sivan

🔊 Chukat (*Rosh Chodesh*)

🕯 5:08 – 🕯 6:00

4 & 5 July – 7 Tammuz

🔊 Balak

🕯 5:10 – 🕯 6:02

11 & 12 July – 14 Tammuz

🔊 Pinchas

🕯 5:13 – 🕯 6:05

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Another hectic month down and we are now almost half way through the year! It's also quite unbelievable that the 2010 World Cup was 4 years ago.... Seems like it was only yesterday.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Rabbi well in his new position as Principal of the Torah Academy Boy's High School as of the 1st of June. He has taken this on without diminishing in his role, both Rabbinic and administratively, at the Shul.

Shavuot went off nicely and we had another wonderful dinner on the 1st night. We had initially planned to have a joint function with West Street Shul at West Street, however, logistically we couldn't achieve this. We had over 90 people attend the dinner, an interesting Tikkun Leil debate and catering by RTG which I must add was really good! Thanks to everyone who

participated and to the Rabbi, Rivky and office for organising it.

We have lost a number of volunteers who did security. Can I please appeal to you to consider joining our security team. The commitment will be one shift a month (every 4 weeks). Till recently, for many years, we have managed to always have someone on duty and have been an example to other Shul's in this regard. We'd like to continue on this path, so please join us, men and women alike. Please contact myself or the Rabbi if you are prepared to assist or would like more info.

Another appeal... we are in the process of preparing the financials of the Shul for our annual audit which will be followed by an AGM when completed. We are a congregation of over have 350 'family' members but we need you to get more involved both in the activities of the Shul, regular e.g. services and occasional e.g. dinners. Equally important is getting involved on the committee.

Furthermore, if what we are currently offering does not appeal to you, let me know. If there are activities or specific things that you would like to see offered at the Shul, please let me know.

Consider this plea. Consider joining the committee of your Shul. Get involved!

I wish you a peaceful and happy June

Enjoy the soccer

Brian

RABBI'S MESSAGE

"Hey! You've got to wake up," called the woman, "it's 7:30 and if you don't get out of bed now, you're going to be late for school." "But I really don't want to go to school today," he replied, it's an absolutely awful place. The children won't stop teasing me and every one of the teachers hates me." "Well," she replied, "never mind that, you still need to go. You are 52 years old and remember, you are the principal!"

I heard the joke years ago but, to be honest, never thought it would apply to me—at least the principal part. Then suddenly, last month, this joke became about me, as I assumed the position of Principal of the Torah Academy Boys' High School. Well I sincerely hope that the teachers are not going to hate me and that the children will be kind to me—so that this joke is never really about me...

When the news was announced, among the many congratulatory messages, came a whatsapp from a good friend and rabbinic colleague. It was four words long and read simply, "Have you gone mad?"

So what possessed me to take on this challenge? Let me reassure you that it was not a moment of temporary insanity and that it was a well (and long) considered decision.

I have been in education for many years, as I started teaching at the Torah Academy in 1987, shortly after arriving in this

country. Two years later we moved to Cape Town for me to assume the dual positions of Rabbi of the Constantia Shul and Head of Jewish Studies at Herzlia Constantia. We remained in the Cape for 12 years until our return to Johannesburg to assume the pulpit of the Oxford Shul.

At that stage I was convinced that I had put down my chalk for good (well, at that stage it was already a whiteboard marker). Within a year I had been lured to return to the classroom, albeit in a very limited capacity as a matric Talmud teacher, which involved only a few hours a week. The rest, as they say, is history...

So why? The answer is that in education you have the opportunity to influence people and make a meaningful impact on their lives. Years later, they will come back to you, make contact from wherever in the world they may be and acknowledge the influence you have had.

For example a text message, received just the other day from a boy whom I taught for his bar-mitzvah in the early nineties, "Rabbi, I am on a train from Amsterdam to Paris and we are going through Belgium currently. I was thinking of you and decided to say hi. May I come see you when I'm back in SA?"

I know there are going to be many sacrifices ahead, particularly as I have undertaken to continue with all my responsibilities to the Oxford community, whom I love. But I am looking forward to great naches in return. I hope to love the children and to have this love reciprocated and to have a relationship of mutual respect with the teachers. PG, decades from now, even if they do not remember me, they will recall what I taught them.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

Even if you don't have high-school students yourself, you have probably noticed lots of them in the streets all day, these days. It is exam time again! Today was the first day in our school and I spent the morning walking aimlessly up and down between desks, watching girls writing exams.

It is interesting to watch (well, when you are invigilating anything is interesting to watch) how different people tackle exams. The difference is already apparent in the days leading up to the exams. Most girls make study-plans. Some spend time studying and others spend time adjusting their study schedule. Some get on with studying and some do a lot of panicking and talking about their panic. And in the exam hall itself, some pick up their pens and write, others sigh and chew the tops of their pens and blow their noses and worry whether or not they will have time to finish.

I suppose it is a lot like the way different people live their lives. Some of us have plans and dreams for our future and get on with trying to make it work. Some of us just do a lot of talking and worrying.

One of the things that I've seen is that, mostly the girls who work steadily, feel more confident when they face their tests and generally do well. As in life too, when we work steadily towards our goals, when we set up good support systems of community, family and friends, when we take time to ask Hashem to assist us in our plans – then when we face the tests of everyday life – we can face them confidently.

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

**Cardinal O'Connor
Was a Jew**

Does it really matter?

*By Rabbi Nechemia Coopersmith
(aish.com)*

So it turns out the Cardinal John Joseph O'Connor, the Catholic Church's top official in New York for 16 years until his death in 2000, was a Jew.

Mary O'Connor Ward, the cardinal's 87-year-old sister, recently discovered that their mother was Jewish, a daughter of an Orthodox rabbi, while digging into her genealogical roots. Their Prussian-born maternal grandparents were Gustave Gumpel and Tina Ruben, who are buried in a Jewish cemetery in Fairfield, Conn.

According to the New York Times, Gustave Gumpel was the rabbi of B'nai Israel and a butcher in the late 1800s. His first wife died in 1890, and his second wife, Tina, died 10 years after coming to the United States, leaving Rabbi Gumpel to raise a large blended family on his own. Cardinal O'Connor's mother, (Deborah on her 1887 birth certificate, Dora in the 1900 census, and Dorothy when she converted to Catholicism in 1908) was a toddler when her mother died. She was raised by two half-sisters in difficult circumstances and fled from home as soon as she came of age, never to come back. Apparently two other sisters also left the family and their Jewish heritage behind.

My gut reaction to reading about Cardinal O'Connor's Jewish roots was one of sadness (different than the JTA who wrote, "Is this really a big deal? Let's say the cardinal really was Jewish. It runs in the family, because so was his boss"). This is not a "cool" story. It's a human

tragedy: a young girl, bereft of her mother, flees from her home. And it's a Jewish tragedy: a Jewish girl abandons her religion and people.

Cardinal O'Connor was a powerful leader who was a staunch defender of the Jewish people. He spoke often about what he had seen at Dachau as a Navy chaplain, fought for Soviet Jewry, and played a role in the Vatican's recognition of Israel. Upon his death the New York Times wrote that he was a "towering presence, a leader whose views and personality were forcefully injected into the great civic debates of his time, a man who considered himself a conciliator, but who never hesitated to be a combatant."

Just imagine what the Cardinal would have accomplished for the Jewish people if his mother would have remained committed to Judaism and given her son, Yochanan Yosef, a strong Jewish education. Of course we can't judge his mother, but we can mourn the loss to the Jewish nation. The reality of assimilation isn't fully expressed through statistics alone. Every Jew is an entire world. The toll of assimilation is more acutely felt when you think about the mindboggling loss of Jewish individuals, families and future descendants who could have made enormous contributions to the Jewish people.

Link in the Chain

The same day I read about Mary O'Connor's discovery through genealogy of her family's Jewish lineage I received a file from my wife's cousin that conveys the thorough research into my wife's grandmother's family tree. It turns out that even though she herself wasn't especially religious, she was a direct descendant of some of the greatest rabbinic figures in the last 1000 years. Rashi, the

foremost commentator on the Chumash and Talmud, is her 25th great grandfather. The Shach, Rabbi Shabtai HaCohen, and the Rema, Rabbi Moshe Isserles, are her 11th great grandfathers. The list includes a wide range of European Jewish leaders, judges, and authors since the Middle Ages. We were amazed. Who knew?

Chances are very likely that if any Jew today would trace their direct lineage back 25 generations they would also discover that they are descendants of some of the greatest leading scholars and Jewish leaders in Jewish history.

What difference does it make? Two things strike me.

One, it makes the chain of Jewish history far more vivid when I see plotted out on paper the ancestral sequence linking my wife's grandmother, who died this year, directly to Rashi. I am not just a Jew living in the present in a vacuum; I am part of dynamic chain of transmission that stretches a few thousand years, and I am the present link in the chain.

And knowing the illustriousness of my family's personal lineage gives me a greater sense of the privilege and responsibility to carry that legacy forward.

I wonder if things would have been different if Cardinal O'Connor had discovered as a young child that he was a direct descendant of the Vilna Gaon, Rashi or King David.

SHACHARIT (A.M.)	
Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)	
Sunday to Thursday	5:15
Friday	5:20
Shabbat	5:00

A STORY

Once, when Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneersohn (who later served as the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe in the years 1882–1920) and his brother Rabbi Zalman Aharon were children, they played at "Rebbe and Chassid." The young Sholom DovBer was close to five years of age at the time, and his brother a year and four months older. Little Sholom DovBer refused to play the "rebbe," asserting that "there is only one rebbe" (i.e., the real rebbe, the children's grandfather Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch). So Zalman Aharon acted the role of rebbe, and Shalom DovBer played the chassid.

A chassid's consultation with his rebbe in yechidut (private audience) usually concerns one of two things: a query of *haskalah*—an intellectual question or problem; or a request for guidance in *avodah*, the chassid's personal service of G-d. In the children's game, the "chassid" entered into yechidut with a query in each of these areas.

In the *haskalah* portion of the audience, the exchange went as follows:

"Rebbe, what is a Jew?"

"A Jew is fire."

"So why am I not burned when I touch you?"

"Fire does not burn fire."

The "chassid" then complained of a deficiency in his personal *avodah*, and the "rebbe" advised him on how to correct it. To this the young Sholom DovBer said: "You're not a rebbe."

"Why not?" asked Zalman Aharon.

"A rebbe," said the child, "would emit a sigh before replying".

(chabad.org)

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

- Susan Woolf who completed her Doctorial Thesis.

BIRTHS

- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great grandson.

BARMITZVAH

- John and Brenda Brick on the Bar-Mitzvah of their grandson, Shawn Brick on 28th June

ENGAGEMENTS

- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the engagement of their grandson, Moshe Sarchi, to Nechama Moss of Australia.

BIRTHDAYS

- Mannie Zar on his 83rd birthday on 1st June.
- Henry Ulfane on his 90th birthday on 8th June
- Julie Lampert on her 75th birthday on 11th June
- Tzvi Gudelsky on his 30th birthday on 13th June
- Andrea Aaron on her 75th birthday on 23rd June

ANNIVERSARIES

- Mazal tov to Philip and Aileen Shifren on their 45th anniversary on 8th June
- Henry and Molly Ulfane on their 65th Anniversary on 19th June
- Mazal tov to Frank and Mira Wilks on their 40th anniversary on 23rd June.

REFUAH SHLEMAH

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:



- Dawn Nates
- Sandra Sher

BEREAVEMENTS

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- Barry Jacobson on the loss of his father, Max.
- Wendy Ringo on the loss of her mother, Mimi Jossel.
- Heather, Laurence, Clive and Brian Bank on the loss of their mother, Freda Bloch.

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



Have you visited the Shul's Facebook page recent?
www.facebook.com/oxfordshuly

Make sure to click on the  button at the top of that page and Oxford notices will start appearing in your own news feed.

**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