

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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June 2015

Sivan / Tamuz 5775

## SHABBAT TIMES

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

12 & 13 June – 26 Sivan

🕒 Shelach

🕒 5:05 – 🕒 5:57

19 & 20 June – 3 Tammuz

🕒 Korach

🕒 5:06 – 🕒 5:58

26 & 27 June – 10 Tammuz

🕒 Chukat

🕒 5:08 – 🕒 5:59

3 & 4 July – 17 Tammuz

🕒 Balak

🕒 5:10 – 🕒 6:02

10 & 11 July – 24 Tammuz

🕒 Pinchas

🕒 5:13 – 🕒 6:04

## RABBI'S MESSAGE

June is exam time. When I was growing up—in the Northern Hemisphere—this was the end of the academic year and the pressure of the final tests was intense. In South Africa we are only mid-way through the school year yet exam fever still grips scholars of all ages, from High School learners through to University students.

As children we used to think that tests were an **unnecessary** and **cruel** form of **punishment**. Some of my fellow students even advanced the theory that when teachers are bored and tired of teaching, they find it easier to hand out examination papers

to the pupils. When I became a teacher myself I worked out that setting and then marking exams is actually far more difficult and time consuming than preparing a lesson and delivering it!

Ah! How we all looked forward to the day when we would write the last ever exam—and then be free of all further testing... Little did we know what the world had in store for us! Financial challenges, ill health, family issues, professional troubles, social problems... It came as a shock that life's real tests are far more difficult to pass than any scholastic assessment.

**Unnecessary?** A test forces a student to prepare, to review and to concentrate. Likewise when we are about to be faced with one of life's unavoidable challenges, we work very hard, strengthening our faith, praying to Hashem and committing to improve our observance of mitzvot.

Although you, as the pupil, are aware of your own abilities, others may not be. Only after you have successfully passed will all around you know what you are really made of. In fact, sometimes you may not even be aware of your full potential until you have been tried and tested. Personal hardship taps deep into hitherto unknown aptitudes and talents, and the

individual emerges strengthened and empowered.

**Cruel?** In theory, an exam is tailored to the students' and class's potential. It may be possible for the odd vindictive examiner to punish his students by setting impossible assessments (to get back at them for the behaviour during the preceding term?). When Hashem tests us, we must remember that the trial is being set by the ultimate source of all goodness, and that He will never place before us tests when He knows we do not have the strength to withstand them.

**Punishment?** On the contrary! Passing tests in the school environment earns us a promotion into the next stage of our studies. Succeeding in Hashem's classroom earns us rewards in this world, not to mention what is in store in the world to come.

Good luck to all for the examination season. To the scholars who will get the instant prize of a well-deserved holiday. And to all of us, whose test season is not limited to June and November but will reap a recompense that is commensurate with the difficulty and the intensity of the trial.

Have a great month and keep warm.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

**FROM THE REBBETZIN**

It seems that the biggest reason South Africans love South Africa (Jo'burg in particular) is because of our blessed weather. Undoubtedly we have the most terrific climate of anywhere else in the world: Not too hot or too cold; no humidity; no snow; no midnight sunsets nor dark afternoons; no extremes. Most days we have glorious blue skies and sunshine.

So the last week, with its very cold spell, has left us moaning like crazy. Every conversation is peppered with complaints about the cold. (Takes our minds off the complaints about nKandla and Eskom for a bit.)

I learnt in the Book of Tehilim that we are supposed to make an effort to see the good around us, to take notice of all the wonders that Hashem performs and to use this knowledge to make us feel happy.

King David points out that it is in the little everyday things that we should see miracles. Nature should appear wondrous. He guarantees us that this will make us feel blessedly content.

Here we can feel truly blessed as we look out, most days, at our beautiful weather. Despite our coughs and runny noses that come along with a bit of icy wind, we can thank Hashem once again for His many varied kindnesses and feel happy.

May we all have what to feel happy about.

Have a good month

*Rivky*

**DVAR TORAH****ROCKS AND DIAMONDS**

*Shimon Posner*  
([www.chabad.com](http://www.chabad.com))

It was a wintry Friday night in Brooklyn. A roomful of Jewish college kids in the 60's, challenging the young rabbi chairing the roundtable: How can you believe in G-d when science has proven...? Why keep kosher in an age of government inspection and refrigeration? Isn't it racist to speak of the chosen people? The rabbi was doing his best.

Sitting in the audience was an elderly rabbi, long black coat, elegant white beard. He rose to speak.

"The questions you are asking are good questions, but for this you don't need to come to Chabad. Anyone who has learned Torah can tell you these answers. But you came to Chabad; now let me tell you why you came."

Everyone there was surprised he could speak English; the rabbi with the immaculate black coat and long white beard began his story.

A little boy was walking with his father down a steep hill in the heat of the day. They saw a man coming up the hill towards

them, sweating, with a heavy sack on his shoulders weighing him down. When the man reached them the little boy asked what he had in his sack, why he was going up the hill, why he was working so hard.

The man told the little boy that his oven had broken and he had to come down to the valley to get more stones to build himself an oven.

Why not get more stones, asked the little boy, and build a bigger oven that will keep you warmer and you can have more food -- there must be more stones still in the valley?

Oh, you little boy, said the man, you don't yet know what it means to have to work, how hard it is to schlep. He put his free hand on the little boy's shoulder. When you'll be big like me you'll be happy with a little oven too.

The little boy and his father continued down the hill.

They saw another man coming up the hill towards them. Same size man, same size sack, but this man didn't seem so weighed down.

What have you in the sack, the little boy wanted to know, is it stones, are

you going to build yourself a small oven?

Oh no, the man smiled broadly, no oven building for me! See, I was down in the valley digging for turnips and I hit a treasure. Diamonds! Rubies! Pearls! I have two daughters, two weddings to make, I'm going to open a store and stop peddling from town to town, build myself a house with wooden floors and...

Why not get more diamonds, interrupted the boy, there must be more left in the valley?

Son, said the old man putting his free hand on the little boy's shoulder, believe me, I searched the valley clean. I don't think there is another diamond down there.

The little boy and his father continued down the hill.

You see, said the little boy's father, when you're carrying diamonds they're never too heavy. The first guy may have had diamonds too, but he didn't know what they were.

The old rabbi with the long white beard looked at the college kids.

"You see what the father was telling the boy? A mitzvah is a diamond. Every mitzvah that we do is a precious, precious

thing. This is why you come to Chabad; not just to learn a mitzvah but to learn that it is a diamond. When you know they are diamonds then most of your questions will be answered."

I heard this story on a wintry Friday night in Brooklyn. A roomful of Jewish college kids in the early 80's, challenging the rabbi chairing the roundtable. The questions had shifted with the times: why do we need mitzvahs when we can meditate instead?

A man got up and told this story that he had heard twenty years earlier on a cold wintry night a few blocks from where they were now. He told the story well and ended with the words, "It's been twenty years since Rabbi Kazarnovsky stood up that night to tell that story. I could tell you dozens of experiences I've had since then, but to you it would be meaningless."

I jolted. It was just four weeks since my grandfather died. Rabbi Kazarnovsky was my grandfather.

I type the story with pride and awe. Pride because he was my grandfather; awed because he was my grandfather.

Passion, demands the Torah. You can't be

Jewish out of a sense of duty. An observant Jew? an unsatisfying label. Like an obedient child, a dutiful husband, a law-abiding citizen, an "observant Jew" accepts obligations - yet keeps on trudging. I know we're the Chosen People, moans Tevye, but isn't it time you chose someone else?

Duty and diligence are not calculated to inspire, they're heavy rocks. But when duty and diligence are born of passion they are tough as steel and as brilliant diamonds. A heavy load? Maybe, on the scales: but not on my back.

"You have to be a rabbi," a friend told me when I was seventeen, "it's expected of you, it's even in your genes." A duty, he was saying. And I thank a rabbi with an immaculate, long, black coat and an elegant, long, white beard, for showing me it's a diamond.

### SHACHARIT (A.M.)

**Sunday and Public Holidays** 8:00

**Monday to Friday** 7:15

17/06 & 18/6 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00  
17/07 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00

**Shabbat & Festivals** 9:00

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

**Sunday to Friday** 5:15

05/07 (Fast of 17 Tammuz): 7:00

**Shabbat** 5:00

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- David and Samara Rivkind on the birth of daughter
- Cynthia Katz on the birth of a great-grandson in Australia.

**ANNIVERSARIES**

- Gary and Melanie Epstein on their 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on 23 June.

- Leon and Rene Levy on their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on 27 June.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Leonard Berger on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday on 5 June.
- Gary Rutstein on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on 19<sup>th</sup> June.
- Norma Wolpe on her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on 27<sup>th</sup> June.

**REFUAH SHLEMAH**

We wish a Speedy Recovery to



- Willie Spark:
- Barney Gordon

- Maureen Ringo
- Glenda Meyers
- Willie Spark
- Gertie Feinstein
- Natie Aremband

**BEREAVEMENTS**

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- Monica Freedman on the death of her husband, Michael ("Mickey").

*Oxford Shul presents*

# a CHORAL FESTIVAL

*in memory of Dawn Nates*

**Sat 27 June | Motzei Shabbat 10 Tammuz**  
**7:45 pm**

R50  
Bookings:  
Rene 082 925 5499 | Evelyn 082 704 2592 | Office 011 646 6020

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SAVE THE DATE:

THE SHUL'S

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 1 July

7:45 p.m.

At the Shul

*Official notices will be sent out shortly*