

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

March 2021

Adar/Nissan 5781

SHABBAT TIMES

🕯 Parasha - 🕯 Candle Lighting

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

12 & 13 March – 29 Adar

🕯 Vayakhel & Pekudei (*Hachodesh*)

🕯 6:09 – 🕯 6:57

19 & 20 March – 7 Nisan

🕯 Vayikra

🕯 6:01 – 🕯 6:50

26 & 27 March – 14 Nisan

🕯 Tzav (*Shabbat Hagadol*)

🕯 5:54 – 🕯 6:42

2 & 3 April – 21 Nisan

7th Day of Pesach

🕯 5:47 – 🕯 6:35

9 & 10 April – 28 Nisan

🕯 Shemini

🕯 5:39 – 🕯 6:28

RABBI'S MESSAGE

At the end of this very long year, I would like to report on the State of the Shul. This is an exercise usually reserved in conjunction with 31 December or in the case of religious organisations, around Rosh Hashanah. But with Purim at the end of February, a full cycle of Shul life has passed under these very surreal conditions.

We celebrated Pesach, then Shavuot, followed by Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah, Chanukah and finally Purim—an entire year's worth of holidays—all under the shadow of the pandemic. For roughly half of that time, our Shul was closed altogether. The other half of the year we held services under strict, almost anti-social health

protocols, precluded from offering brochas and seated away from each other. Even with all the extreme precautions taken most in the community still feared attending. Every few weeks, lockdown regulations changed, increasing or decreasing the maximum duration we could worship and how many congregants could participate, or banning faith gatherings outright.

Looking back on this year, where does Oxford stand today? I am going to be honest, there were times when I feared for the future of our Shul and our ability to survive this crisis. You may recall my Yom Kippur appeal, in the form of a video message sent to each of our members, in which I reached out to you for your support in making sure Oxford did not succumb to COVID-19, pointing out our comorbidities (age: the Shul is 70+; demographics: the movement of our community to outlying suburbs etc.).

The response of our members was heart-warmingly reassuring. Not only measured in Rands and Cents, but also in the way Oxfordians loyally rallied together, with a strengthened sense of community.

So where do we stand today? My sense is that we are, in so many ways, stronger than before. The actual numbers attending services is greatly diminished but the last year has taught us that

this is possibly one of the least important factors in judging a community. What we have uncovered is that a sense of belonging and connection is a far more significant barometer of health.

I am proud that we have been able to resume services, not only on Shabbat but also with a minyan several times a week, in particular to enable Kadish on the occasion of yartzeits. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to the very small group of stalwarts who are making this possible.

Initially forced by circumstances and subsequently by choice, Zoom services became a novel way to pray and connect. Our Erev Shabbat services as well as our weekly shiur on a Wednesday night are attended by many current member and former members now living around the world (not to mention members of my prior shul in Cape Town).

We are not out of the woods yet. But as we head into a second year of this surreal existence, I have far more confidence in our ability to weather the rest of the storm.

Oxford is the largest synagogue edifice in the country and as far as I know, in the Southern Hemisphere. What will see us through is the fact that it is the Shul with a massive heart and soul to match.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

Do you remember this time last year? We waited to hear if schools were closing. Children who were studying overseas were rushing to get home before the borders closed. Betzalel came home with COVID. We told our domestic to stay home for a while. We made Pesach without our overseas and local guests. Foolishly, we thought that in a few weeks it would all be back to normal. Now it is a year later, and we wonder if this is what is normal.

So many times I walk out of my house and only, when I am halfway up the driveway, do I remember and have to go back for my mask. Secretly I am pleased that I forgot a mask. It means that my head refuses to make this normal. It means that I believe that one day we will live like we used to, without masks and social distancing, the way we are really meant to. Masks will never become normal, no matter how long we wear them.

This is much like our belief in Moshiach. No matter how long we live in Galut we must never accept this as our reality, as our normal. We must live with the belief in and longing for Moshiach to come. No matter how normal our lives seem to be, no matter how long it lasts, this is not normal. May Moshiach come speedily in our time

Have a good month

Rivky

DVAR TORAH***The Fifth Cup***

By Yanki Tauber (chabad.org)

Why pour a cup if we lack the ability to drink it?

In the course of the Passover Seder we drink four cups of wine, corresponding to the four "expressions of redemption" in the Divine declaration (Exodus 6:2-8):

"I will take you out",

"I will deliver you",

"I will redeem you",

"I will acquire you."

For the Exodus incorporated in itself four distinct redemption's: our physical removal from the geographical boundaries of Egypt ("I will take you out"); our delivery from Egyptian hegemony ("I will deliver you from their bondage"); the creation of an inherently free people, immune to any future possibility of enslavement ("I will redeem you"); and our election as G-d's chosen people at Sinai seven weeks later on the festival of Shavuot ("I will acquire you as My nation, and I will be to you a G-d") - the purpose and goal of the Exodus.

In truth, there is also a fifth "expression of redemption" in G-d's communication to Moses - the promise that "I will bring you into the land." Indeed, there is a corresponding fifth cup of wine - the "Cup of Elijah" - that is filled during the final stage of the Seder.

But this cup of wine is not drunk; instead, it is placed at the center of the table where the children keep watch over the gently quivering liquid,

hoping to detect a sign of its sampling by Elijah the Prophet, in whose honor it was poured.

The first four elements of the redemption are something that we are to "drink" - to actively pursue and realize ourselves.

It is within our power to overcome all that limits and enslaves us, both physically and spiritually, both without and within; to develop our potential for freedom, and to exercise this freedom as the freedom to fulfill our mission as G-d's people as communicated to us at Sinai.

But the final and culminating level of redemption - its "I will bring you" element, which shall be fully realized only in the era of Mashiach - is something that transcends our human efforts.

This is not a cup we can drink on our own. We can only bring ourselves to the threshold of this Divinely perfect world, through our active realization of the first four "expressions of redemption."

The drinking of the fifth cup awaits Elijah, herald of the final and ultimate redemption.

SERVICE TIMES

All services are by prior booking. Please call the office.

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday & Public Holidays 8:00

Monday to Friday 7:15

*25/03: 7:00 (Fast of Firstborn)
30/03, 31/03 & 01/04: 7:00 (Chol Hamoed)*

Shabbat & Festivals 9:30

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday 6:15

from 21/03 6:00

Friday 6:00

Shabbat 6:00

from 20/03 5:45

WHAT TO DO WHEN PESACH BEGINS ON SATURDAY NIGHT

★ *Sale of Chametz*

Must be completed before Friday 26 March at 8:30 a.m.

During the eight days of Pesach one may neither eat nor own any Chametz (leavened food). It is not practical to consume or to physically get rid of all Chametz before the onset of Pesach. One may however sell all Chametz to a non-Jewish person—if the sale is valid according to Jewish law then the Chametz is not ‘owned’ during Pesach.

The technical details of this sale are involved because the goods do not physically change hands. An additional challenge, this year, is that the sale, contracted on Friday morning, is only to take effect the next day. It is therefore highly recommended that you appoint a rabbi as your agent to sell your Chametz before Pesach. The rabbi will also re-purchase your Chametz from the Gentile at the completion of Pesach.

★ *Siyum*

Thursday 25 March after the morning service

When G-d slew the firstborn of Egypt, He spared the firstborn sons of Israel. Out of gratitude, all firstborn sons fast on this day. Because Erev Pesach is on Shabbat this year the fast is brought forward to Thursday. To avoid fasting, simply participate in a “Siyum” the formal completion of a Talmudic tractate, on the morning of the fast: the spiritual achievement and ensuing celebration are cause enough to void the fast. A Siyum will be made in Shul after the morning service.

★ *Bedikat Chametz*

Thursday 25 March in the evening

Conduct the formal search of your house for chametz after nightfall. This is normally performed on the eve of Pesach but is brought forward by twenty-four hours this year in honour of Shabbat. It is customary to hide ten pieces of bread around the house. These are then “found” when the search is performed. We traditionally use a candle, wooden spoon and feather for our search: the candle lights the way; any chametz found is swept by the feather onto the wooden spoon and dumped into a paper bag. Begin searching with this blessing:

BARUCH ATA ADO-NAI ELO-HEINU MELECH HA-OLAM ASHER KIDESHANU BEMITZVOTAV VETZIVANU AL BI-UR CHAMETZ.

After your search, put the bag—containing the chametz, feather, candle and spoon—in a place you won’t overlook, until the morning (when it is burnt), and recite this disclaimer (original Aramaic text can be found in the first pages of most Haggadot):

ALL LEAVEN OR ANYTHING LEAVENED WHICH IS IN MY POSSESSION, WHICH I HAVE NEITHER SEEN NOR REMOVED, AND ABOUT WHICH I AM UNAWARE SHALL BE CONSIDERED NAUGHT AND OWNERLESS AS THE DUST OF THE EARTH

★ *Burning of Chametz*

Friday 26 March before 10:30 a.m.

The morning after your chametz search, retrieve your bag of chametz, take it outside and burn it in a safe place. Chametz is usually burnt on Erev Pesach, but because it cannot be done on Shabbat it is done a day early.

Only Chametz that will be needed for the Shabbat meals is left over. For this reason the traditional second formula for annulling Chametz is not said at this stage.

There will be a fire available in the Shul driveway (North Avenue entrance) for burning of Chametz between 10:00 and 10:30 a.m.

★ *First Shabbat Meal*

Friday 26 March in the evening

Because it is forbidden to make the house *Pesachdik* on Shabbat, all Shabbat food must be Kosher for Pesach and must be cooked and served in Pesach utensils and dishes. However Hamotzi must be made over Challah (as Matzah may not be eaten on Pesach eve). Care must be taken to eat well away from the table so that Pesach dishes and cloths do not come into contact with Challah—ideally eating in a different room or even outdoors—and all crumbs must be carefully swept up and disposed of.

★ *Second Shabbat Meal*

Saturday 27 March before 9:45 a.m.

Once again Hamotzi is made over Challah at this meal. Because Chametz may not be eaten after 9:45 a.m. the meal must take place early in the day. The procedure is the same as the previous night. Any leftover Chametz must either be given away to a non-Jew or crumbled up and flushed away.

Shacharit should be done at home, followed by Kiddush and Hamotzi. In Shul we will begin at 10:00 a.m. with Torah reading, followed by Musaf.

★ *Annulment of Chametz*

Saturday 27 March before 10:30 a.m.

The second formula for annulling the Chametz is recited after all leftover Chametz from the Shabbat meals has been disposed of. (Here again the original Aramaic text can be found in the first pages of most Haggadot.)

ALL LEAVEN OR ANYTHING LEAVENED WHICH IS IN MY POSSESSION, WHETHER I HAVE SEEN IT OR NOT, WHETHER I HAVE OBSERVED IT OR NOT, WHETHER I HAVE REMOVED IT OR NOT SHALL BE CONSIDERED NAUGHT AND OWNERLESS AS THE DUST OF THE EARTH.

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Esme Utian on the birth of a great granddaughter in Cape Town.
- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great granddaughter in Jerusalem and a great granddaughter in New York

BAR MITZVAH

- Maurice and Rose Oskowitz on the occasion of the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson, Joshua Tyler Sher, in Sydney

BIRTHDAYS

- Inna Orlanski on the occasion of her 65th birthday on 11th March
- Leah Lange on the occasion of her 90th birthday on 13th March

- Franky Auerbach on the occasion of her 75th birthday on 25th March
- Cecilie Marks on the occasion of her 75th birthday on 30th March

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Danny Sack
- Julie Soicher
- Tanya Manoim



**HAPPY
PASSOVER**

Pesach begins on Sunday 28 March

(First Seder Saturday night, 27 March)

See page 3 for the intricacies of Shabbat leading straight into Pesach



DELEGATION OF POWER FOR SALE OF CHAMETZ

I, the undersigned, fully empower and permit Rabbi Chaikin to act in my place and stead, and on my behalf to sell all Chametz possessed by me, knowingly or unknowingly as defined by the Torah and Rabbinic Law (e.g. Chametz, possible Chametz, and all kinds of Chametz mixtures).

Also Chametz that tends to harden and adhere to inside surfaces of pans, pots, or cooking utensils, the utensils themselves, and all kinds of live animals and pets that have been eating Chametz and mixtures thereof.

Rabbi Chaikin is also empowered to lease all places wherein the Chametz owned by me may be found, particularly at the address/es listed below, and elsewhere.

Rabbi Chaikin has full right to appoint any agent or substitute in his stead and said substitute shall have full right to sell and lease as provided herein.

Rabbi Chaikin also has the full power and right to act as he deems fit and proper in accordance with all the details of the Bill of Sale used in the transaction to sell all my Chametz, Chametz mixtures, etc., as provided herein.

This power is in conformity with all Torah, Rabbinic and Civil laws.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address/es:

Sale of Chametz can be done:

- **In person** (ideal method)
- **By fax:** ☎ 086-580-2624 or **by email** ✉ info@oxfordshul.com
- **By telephone** or **WhatsApp:** ☎ 011-646-6020
- If unable go to <https://tinyurl.com/OxfordChametz> and complete form

This process must be complete by Friday 26 March at 8:30 a.m.