

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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May 2012

Iyar 5772

SHABBAT TIMES

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

11 & 12 May – 20 Iyar

🕒 Emor

🕒 5:13 – 🕒 6:03

18 & 19 May – 27 Iyar

🕒 Behar & Bechukotai

🕒 5:10 – 🕒 6:00

25 & 26 May – 5 Sivan

🕒 Bamidbar

🕒 5:07 – 🕒 5:58

1 & 2 June – 12 Sivan

🕒 Naso

🕒 5:06 – 🕒 5:57

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

"We took the customary summit photos and ate some chocolate. I felt the usual anticlimax. What now? It was a vicious circle. If you succeed with one dream, you come back to square one and it's not long before you're conjuring up another, slightly harder, a bit more ambitious – a bit more dangerous." Excerpt from Touching the Void by Joe Simpson

Doesn't his paragraph sum up human nature perfectly? We all strive to reach a dream but when it's achieved there is a certain anticlimax. We all want material things but when we get them there is a certain let down. I remember this very clearly with my colleagues who wrote and passed their final specialising exams, where the exam itself became the be all and end all and not what could be achieved with the exam. Once the exam was over there was a definite anticlimax.

So what makes some challenges end in anticlimax and others not? Let's compare Moses who also climbed a mountain, perhaps not as cold, high or dangerous as the Siula Grande in the Peruvian Andes. He ascended with a purpose of receiving the Torah and bringing down the tablets. His purpose wasn't to climb the mountain because it was there or because it was challenging. His goal was the Luchot which was only the beginning of the journey. There was no anticlimax, other than the incident of the golden calf unfortunately, because the challenge wasn't over. Same goes for the final exams. The candidates who kept it in perspective, i.e. now they can practice as specialists, didn't experience the same anticlimax as those who focused on the exam as being the end point. In both examples there was a longer term purpose to the challenge, unlike for Joe Simpson, not that his feat (excuse the pun) was anything but unbelievable, awe inspiring and miraculous.

I think this may be relevant now as we count the Omer building up to Shavuot. The idea behind it is a personal growth and challenge, leading up to receiving the Torah over again. There is no anticlimax once getting to Shavuot with the feeling of "after seven weeks of counting now what?" There is a long term view that keeps us in perspective. I think this is an important lesson in life.

Now, if by some chance you are still feeling a bit of let down at the end of the Omer count, please join us at the annual Shavuot dinner and learning

program which will be held on Saturday night the 26th. Great food for the body and soul!

If that's not enough then you can look forward to the upcoming Choir festival titled "Generations of Music continue from here" in celebration of 65 years of music at Oxford. It is to be held at the Shul on the 9th of June.

If you are more a hands on type of person then you can look forward to the AGM. The shul's audit is almost complete and notices will sent out in the next two weeks. Please give some thought to joining the committee... it's not that bad!

So much happening at Oxford but I've now run out of space.

Count well and see you in Shul.

Brian Levy

RABBI'S MESSAGE

What a month! I added it up. In all, 12 trips to Oliver Tambo International Airport over the course of April...

Six of those were visits to the Arrivals Hall on the ground floor of the aerodrome. That is such a happy place. As you wait for your own loved ones, you are surrounded by other reunions—hugs, kisses, tears of joy as husbands meet wives, parents reunite with children... Then you see the people you are waiting for through the glass panels and your heart fills with delight as you are about to be near those you have missed so dearly.

After six of those journeys, our family was complete. By the time we sat down to our first Seder on Friday night, all of our children, their spouses and our grandchildren were around one table. Probably a historic moment—in fact a couple of days later I engaged a photographer to come record the moment for posterity.

What an amazing two weeks those were. Yes it was hectic, and noisy. The food devoured was astronomical – pockets of potatoes, chickens by the case, dozens (and dozens) of eggs. We consumed over 30 Gigabytes of internet broadband!

Rivky and I enjoyed every moment: talking to the children and playing with the grandchildren and, even more, watching the children speak to each other and the grandchildren interact with one another.

Pesach was followed by a further six trips to the airport. But this time to the Hall of Sad Farewells on the top level... There are still kisses and hugs, but they are accompanied by tears of sorrow as we say goodbye to people we are going to miss.

After six of those drives, the house was eerily still. (Disclaimer: TG we still have three children living at home—everything is relative). And I thought to myself, “Has the magic now been undone? Is it as if it had never happened?”

The past month Jews all over celebrated Pesach. It was an intense spiritual and religious experience, in addition to the gastronomical dimension. Then it's all over, and we may ask ourselves a similar question. Now that the dishes are packed away, the trestles folded up and the

credit card bill for this expensive yom tov nearly settled, what are we left with? Has Passover just passed us over?

I remember once hearing from an elderly Yiddish-speaking lady, who was quoting her father, “Never say ‘a yomtov is adurch’ (a holiday has just passed); always say ‘a yomtov is tzugekumen’ (we have just gained a holiday). For if the festival just passed without changing us and affecting us in a meaningful and lasting manner, it was truly a waste of our time and our money. From the experience of a Jewish holiday we must grow, improve and become changed.

I hope, likewise, that our family time will have lasting effects. That the bonds we have re-established and strengthened will have a enduring and meaningful effect. That the memories will linger and warm us all. That we won't allow physical distance or time zone changes to become a barrier to love.

As I walk around our now empti(er) home I will stop in front of the family photo which will soon be hanging in a place of honour and will count our blessings, as I hope and pray for the next time (PG soon).

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

SHACHARIT (A.M.)	
Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
22/05 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00	
27/05 & 28/05 (Shavuot): 9:00	
MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)	
Sunday to Thursday	5:15
Friday	5:30
from 11/05	5:20
Shabbat	5:00

FROM THE REBBETZIN

It feels like months since I have had any normal routine. Starting with Betzalel's Bar-mitzvah, then Pesach, when we were privileged to have all our children at home with us. And then my visit to New York.

Sitting in Kennedy airport on Monday morning I really understood the meaning of mixed feelings. Being so sad to leave, and so happy to be going home. By nature I am a home girl. I like to be in routine, I like my own creature comforts, and most of all I like to be with my husband and children.

My time in New York was very special, being with my daughters and their families in their homes. Watching their routines and everyday lives, seeing them as wives and mothers in their own space. It was both humbling and gratifying to see the things they have copied from our homes to theirs.

Often we like to think we are so modern, so changed, so different from the generations before us. In truth we are really so much the same. Perhaps the pictures on our walls, or the clothes we wear or the food we eat look different, but the love and the values are the same that have been passed from generation to generation. So, as I watched my daughters in their homes with their families, the biggest nachas was the realization that they have now taken their rightful places in this eternal cycle carrying on with the love and values we hold so dear.

May we all have nachas, always.

Have a good month

Rivky

DVAR TORAH**SHAVUOT
RENEWING OUR VOWS***by Riva Pomerantz
www.aish.com*

Marla and Steve were high-school sweethearts who got married with the whole town in attendance. It was a dream wedding, and their smiles as they gazed at each other under the wedding canopy radiated absolute bliss.

After many years of children and bills and taxes and layoffs, Marla and Steve were still smiling, but...Life had gotten in the way. There were days when they barely said a few words to each other before collapsing in bed, exhausted. There were times that they argued, that they let each other down. It happens, you know.

Steve was surprised to come home from work one day to find Marla standing in the living room, gazing longingly at something in her hands.

"Honey, take a look at this," Marla said. Steve came over to see the picture Marla was holding and he felt his heart catch in his throat.

"Look at us," she whispered softly. "Remember how we stood together, 24 years ago, and became man and wife?"

He nodded.

"Remember those dreams and hopes? Remember how we felt, what we thought about?" she pressed him.

Again a nod.

"I feel like we've drifted," she said sadly. "How about we do it all again?"

Steve looked at his wife and smiled. It was a wonderful idea -- a symbol of renewal, of recapturing the love and commitment they had shared together so many years prior. And as they renewed their marriage vows before a small, joyous crowd of well-wishers, Marla and Steve felt more connected than ever before.

On the holiday of Shavuot, the entire Jewish Nation is invited to attend the "Re-Nup" of the year, where we renew the vows we took at the marriage ceremony on Mt. Sinai over 3000 years ago. No tuxedo required.

Every Jewish soul stood at the foot of that majestic mountain. The wedding was perfect -- down to the flowers. The "Groom," God, as it were, united in total harmony with the "Bride," the Jewish People, for better or worse, through good times and bad. There were lightning bolts and celestial pronouncements that left an indelible impression on every soul in attendance. We were completely in love and radiated with infinite hopes and dreams. Our hearts beat with one singular purpose: to devote ourselves to God and serve Him by keeping His Torah and mitzvot.

We felt eternal bliss.

And then...you know, Life gets in the way. Kids, work, bills, taxes, sometimes it's hard for "spouses" to make time for each other. Our connection with our new Better Half became tenuous, the love began to fade. Sometimes there was just no time to spend even a few minutes fulfilling the hopes and dreams that had so

rosily reflected in our eyes when we stood at that blazing mountain. Sometimes there were barely a few words we mumbled to God all day, if any at all.

"I'm about to go into a meeting, God. If you could just give me good health, a decent living, and let my kid win the wrestling championship, that would be great. Talk to You later!"

"On the weekend, I'm really going to read that new Jewish book and bring a little spirituality into my life. I promise!"

Like Steve and Marla, we get caught up in the vicissitudes of life and gradually we become like two strangers living in the same house. Except with God, the distance is caused by us; His commitment to the relationship never wavers.

It's time to renew our vows.

Shavuot gives us the opportunity to step out of our hectic lives and celebrate our anniversary by rekindling the deep, passionate love between us and God and recommit ourselves to the relationship.

It's a chance to reflect and reconnect with our Beloved. It's a time to bask in the sweetness of our relationship and to treasure the precious wedding gift, the Torah, that He gave us at Mt. Sinai. Far more than a cheesecake fest, Shavuot is a once-a-year opportunity to celebrate with God and remind ourselves of our pledge to be His cherished nation. For richer, for poorer.

Happy Anniversary.

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

ENGAGEMENTS

- Ronald and Susan Woolf on the engagement of their son Shaun to Gina Rick
- Blima Nudelman on the engagement of her grandson Jonathan Pelzner to Ayelet Ross

MARRIAGES

Phillip and Rilla Jacobson on the marriage of their grandson, Chaim Sarchi to Liat Kruger, on 10th May

BIRTHDAYS

- David Kahn on his 70th birthday on 3rd May
- Aileen Shifren on her 65th birthday on 3rd May
- Debborah Gordon on her 35th birthday on 4th May
- Hadassah Kobrin on her 90th birthday on 7th May
- Judith Moritz on her 65th birthday on 20th May
- Wayne Brook on his 40th birthday on 22nd May
- David Hirschowitz on his 50th birthday on 30th May

ANNIVERSARIES

Harry and Marion Sweidan on their 35th anniversary on 17th May

REFUAH SHLEMAH

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:

- Phineas Dubb
- Gert Elsbach

**BEREAVEMENTS**

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- Melanie Jacobs on the death of her father, Lesley Meyers
 - Anne Livshitz on the death of her sister, Ray Rudolph
 - Susan Harris on the death of her brother, David Harris
- May Hashem comfort them and their families among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem and grant them long life.

**SHAVUOT**

Sunday 27 May & Monday 28 May

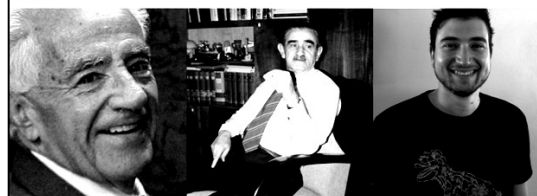
Book now for Shavuot Dinner
Saturday night 26 May

Adults R180 – Children (12 & under) R100

Followed by
Tikkun Leil Shavuot programme

"JOURNEYS"

First person accounts
of powerful personal experiences

GENERATIONS OF MUSIC START HERE**CHOIR FESTIVAL**

A TRIBUTE TO PAST AND PRESENT

CELEBRATING 65 YEARS OF CHORAL
MUSIC AT OXFORD

DATE : SATURDAY NIGHT
9TH JUNE 2012
TIME : 20H00
VENUE : OXFORD SHUL
PRICE : R50

TICKETS FROM:
OXFORD SHUL 011 646 6020
INFO@OXFORDSHUL.COM
AND EVELYN GREEN 011 728 5570

PERFORMANCES BY:
-OXFORD SHUL CHOIR
-JOHANNESBURG JEWISH MALE CHOIR
-JOHANNESBURG JEWISH BOYS' CHOIR
-PINE STREET SHUL CHOIR
-PRETORIA SHUL CHOIR
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