

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

November 2012

Cheshvan / Kislev 5773

SHABBAT TIMES

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

2 & 3 November – 18 Cheshvan
🕒 Vayera
🕒 6:08 – 🕒 6:59

9 & 10 November – 25 Cheshvan
🕒 Chaye Sara
🕒 6:12 – 🕒 7:04

16 & 17 November – 3 Kislev
🕒 Toldot
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:10

23 & 24 November – 10 Kislev
🕒 Vayetze
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:15

30 November & 1 December – 25 Cheshvan
🕒 Vayishlach
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:21

7 & 8 December – 24 Kislev
🕒 Vayeshev
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:26

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Ola

Since my Portuguese is not that great I will continue writing newsletters in English!

I was chatting to a colleague today who was showing me his new phone, the Galaxy S3. It is a nice phone, although more like a mini tablet computer with telephone functionality. Anyway, that not being the point of the story, in passing he mentioned "Blackberry is finished and Apple are in trouble because Samsung is taking their market and fast".

Now neither of us are really tech savvy nor do we

have divine insight into the future and his statements are probably not that accurate, but what struck me was how things change and can change at a drop of a hat. Be they technology, fashion, music, nouveau religion or any trend for that matter, all are equally fickle in their ability to maintain the 'TOP 40' in-thing status.

Not so the Torah, community and Shul in general, which Jews through the ages have depended on for their stability, support, comfort and simchas. Oxford has outlasted many trends and will hopefully continue to do so with your active involvement.

Speaking of active involvement, the annual Whiskey festival is coming up and we're planning a group outing. If you're interested in joining us please let me know.

Well done to Charles, Petrus and Hané Gollach for achieving 2nd prize in this year's succah competition.

As we wind down, or rather 'count down' till the end of the year it leaves me only to wish all the students who are writing exams all the best. We hope they all go very well.

Chao

Brian Levy

RABBI'S MESSAGE

A good friend, who is a personal trainer, once told me that our job descriptions are opposite. His is to afflict the comfortable while mine is to comfort the afflicted.

He is right. He gets paid by the well-to-do to coax them into increasing levels of personal discomfort, obviously for their gain and benefit. I spend much of my time soothing other people's pain, helping out in crisis and comforting the bereaved.

But he is not entirely right. A conversation with a congregant, a couple of days ago, led me to this conclusion. "You see, Rabbi," said the man, "when it comes to religion I have to do what I am comfortable to do. I don't want to push myself. So I come to shul, I learn and I perform mitzvot, but just to the degree of comfort. Religion should not be unpleasant or make me feel uncomfortable."

So let us return to the physical training metaphor. You wake on in the morning and decide to visit the gym. First destination, for a bit of a warm-up, is a run on the treadmill. Well, not exactly a run, because that makes you feel uncomfortable, or even a brisk walk. Just a gentle stroll, so you set the pace and the incline at

manageable levels. And not too long either, because that does not feel nice. As soon as the first sign of muscle tension manifests, time to move on.

Next you grab a pair of kettle bells. The first set you try is too heavy, so you carry on moving to the left, until you find a pair that is just right—you can hold both in your arms without feeling strain. A couple of exercises with that and then it's time for a few crunches—just until it gets sore, then you will have to end. And so goes your routine... Workout's over; off to work. No need for a shower, you never allowed yourself to break into even a light sweat. Have to be comfortable.

We all understand how ludicrous such an exercise regimen sounds. When it comes to physical fitness, the old adage is, "no pain, no gain." If you want your training to be effective you have to stretch yourself just a bit further each time, just beyond comfort, higher and harder and longer.

So it is my job, too, to afflict the comfortable. For when it comes to spiritual improvement, the exact same principles apply. You want to grow and become a better person... stretch yourself!

In October the inspiration of the recent High Holidays still lingers on. But then comes November and this is when we all move into the comfort zone.

Did I just hear the word 'comfort'? Excuse me, I have a job to do.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

Today there are pieces of my heart all along the East coast of America.

As we listen to the news, or check the weather forecasts, we hear how the storm is heading towards each place where someone from our family lives: Connecticut... Long Island... Brooklyn... Baltimore... Some are celebrating pyjama day so they all stay home from school. Others are watching the water rise in their gardens, hoping not to be flooded. All have water and torches and tuna fish.

No one can deny that G-d is bigger than America!

In my own introspections I am justifying for myself why I am so concerned about hurricane Sandy more than any other disaster—Columbia, Haiti, Madagascar. No doubt it is only because the East coast is home to so many people I love.

We like to think of ourselves as caring people; concerned equally about everyone. I remember the year Batsheva went to study in Israel. It was during the Intifada. I was driving when I heard on the news that there was a bomb on a bus in... My heart started beating very hard, my mouth went dry and I felt physically ill. The news reporter continued "Istanbul" – shoo I was relieved and I guiltily wondered why.

For a better world we need to care about everyone – may Hashem keep us all safe.

Have a great month

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

THE GENETIC CODE OF REALITY

*By Rabbi Akiva Tatz
(www.innernet.org.il)*

Torah and the world parallel each other exactly. Torah is the spiritual core, the world is its physical expression... The nature of the parallel between Torah and physical reality is that Torah is the cause and the world is the result. It is not enough to understand that there is a correspondence between every detail of the physical universe and the Torah; it is essential to realize that each detail of the world exists because the Torah says so. In fact, every fine nuance of each detail exists exactly as it does in the world only because the Torah itself contains each of those details within details.

The analogy most commonly used to portray this relationship is that of a blueprint: the Torah is the blueprint of the world. Just as an architect first draws up plans and the builder then follows those plans when building the physical structure, God first brought the Torah into being and then created the world using the Torah as its plan, [as it says:] "He looked into the Torah and created the world."

But there is another depth here: the Torah is not simply a plan in the sense of an architect's drawings; it is a plan in the sense of genes which themselves actually carry out the construction of the organism which results from the code carried in those genes. Certainly, the genetic code corresponds to the physical features which the

organism possesses, but it would be a serious mistake to imagine that this correspondence is descriptive, that the genes somehow reflect in a coded form the physical reality; the genes do not describe, they do not reflect. They are the reason that the body looks as it does, they are the instructions and the mechanism which construct the physical. In fact, the body is a reflection of the genes!

...But there is more. The Torah is not simply a record of the Creation and a history of the world; the 'Nefesh HaChaim' explains that the Creation is ongoing, the Universe is constantly being brought into being by the Creator each instant just as at the first instant. God's word is continuously spoken, and it is continuously condensing into the matter and events of the world. And since the Torah is God's word, the Torah is the medium of Creation always. Not a history, not a description, but a cosmic mechanism bringing reality into being the genes of the world.

This idea is particularly difficult to grasp in the modern era. Western thought is firmly based in the finite, physical dimensions; the yardstick of reality is the laboratory, and that which is not tangible or measurable by experiment is not taken seriously. The entire world of spirituality is relegated to the domain of personal experience and personal belief. The classical Western mind does not engage transcendence. At centre stage in this grasp of the world is the fact of physical

existence; spiritual wisdom is seen, at best, as commentary.

The result of this worldview when applied to Torah is the notion that Torah describes, analyses, comments. One often hears admiring statements about Torah flowing from this perspective — how deep the Torah is, how penetratingly it perceives the almost imperceptible shades of all aspects of the world. But in reality this is nonsense and one who speaks thus speaks against Torah.

To make this point clearer, let us consider a typical example. One often hears it said that the idea behind the laws of kashrus (permitted and forbidden foods) is health — certain foods are not kosher because they are unhealthy. The Torah, in its great wisdom, prohibits such foods in order to safeguard the health of those who heed its commands. Some types of meat are prone to tapeworm infestation; shellfish inhabit parts of the seabed which are contaminated with hepatitis virus and other pathogens, and so on.

Of course there is truth in this approach — Torah living is healthy; a major benefit of the Torah-observant way of life is in fact the physical and mental well-being which is an integral element of Torah observance. But a moment's thought will show the fundamental error of this point of view: such a person understands the physical world to be primary, the world is the way it is as a primary fact — some foods are unhealthy, some are not; that is simply the way things are. And now, after the fact, the

Torah deals with that reality: eat this food, do not eat that. The Torah is secondary to a finite world, and of course it too must be finite. The absolutely inevitable next step is: of course, the Torah must be subject to change! Previously unkosher foods which are no longer unhealthy due to modern inventions or improvements can now be eaten. After all, the entire basis for the prohibition was a health consideration.

But the spiritual secret is quite the opposite. Certain foods are forbidden; the reason is entirely spiritual, whether we grasp some of that spiritual depth or not. The primary element is the spiritual, the transcendent. In fact, it could be that the physical attributes of the forbidden food are as they are because the spiritual essence is impure: the shellfish inhabits its contaminated habitat and may be physically unhealthy because it is unkosher!

This is the grasp which a Jew should have. An effort must be made to break the patterns of Western thought which bind the world within finite boundaries if one wishes to become spiritually conscious. Transcendent wisdom must be primary.

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
15/11 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00	

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	6:00
from 04/11	6:15
Friday	5:45
Shabbat	6:00
from 24/11	6:15

MAZAL TOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Sarah Copelowitz on the birth of a great grandson.

ENGAGEMENTS

- Joe and Myrna Davidovitz on the engagement of their grandson Ariel Eliasov to Mushie Michel
- Esme Kahn on the engagement of her granddaughter Tali Silver to Daniel Berman

BIRTHDAYS

- Flory Mencer on her 85th birthday on 1st November

- Harry Sweidan on his 70th birthday on 5th November
- Alan Norman on his 65th birthday on 13th November


REFUAH SHLEMAH

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:

- Rabbi Bernhard
- Dawn Nates
- Jessie Meltzer



Have you visited the Shul's page yet?
www.facebook.com/oxfordshul

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 BIKKUR CHOLIM PROJECT

Do you know of someone who is ill or alone and would appreciate an occasional telephone call or visit?

Would you like someone to call on you?

Do you have some time to volunteer and give of yourself to the community?

Marion Rapp is the co-ordinator of this Oxford initiative.

Call her for more details on 082 871 3756



הצלחה רבה!
GOOD LUCK TO ALL
THOSE WRITING EXAMS

May your hard work be recognised and rewarded!