

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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November 2013

Kislev 5774

SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting

🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)

For service times see page 3

1 & 2 November – 29 Cheshvan

🕒 Toldot

🕒 6:06 – 🕒 6:57

8 & 9 November – 6 Kislev

🕒 Vayetze

🕒 6:11 – 🕒 7:03

15 & 16 November – 13 Kislev

🕒 Vayishlach

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:08

22 & 23 November – 20 Kislev

🕒 Vayeshev

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:14

29 & 30 November – 27 Kislev

🕒 Miketz

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:20

6 & 7 December – 4 Tevet

🕒 Vayigash

🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:25

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I'll keep it short because people have to go study for their various exams being that time of year again. Good luck to everyone writing exams and the parents too.

We had a great Shabbos as part of the Shabbos project. The Rabbi and Rivky went out of their way to make it a success and it was. I think everyone went away feeling enriched from the experience. Too bad the Jewish Report et al, decided not to include Oxford in their reporting!

Included with this newsletter is the notice of the AGM. Yes, believe it or not, the AGM is finally here. We have a small committee of truly dedicated people and you will see by the various reports that we've

achieved a lot. However, to move forward, we need additional people on the committee. Next year we need to increase our efforts in hosting events and activities. If you would like to get involved please contact me or the office... even if you don't have the time! I promise you'll be in good company.

Mazaltov to the Rabbi and Rivky on the birth of a granddaughter, as well as to Frank (a previous Chairman of Oxford) and Mira Wilks on the birth of a grandson.

See you at the AGM

Warm regards

Brian Levy

RABBI'S MESSAGE

What a Shabbos! An unforgettable experience... Wow! It was amazing...

The superlatives about the Shabbos of 11/12 October do not cease. It's not just our own community, where I have heard from so many participants how special the Shabbos was at Oxford. It's all over town, from every community and in every school. Feedback is reaching us from all over the world, where people heard about our Chief Rabbi's unique initiative. From the Jerusalem Post to the weekly Mishpacha Magazine, the media reports about our experience in glowing terms.

The Shabbos project website and Facebook page are filled with individual testimonies of people who testify how they were moved and transformed by their Shabbos observance.

Everyone seems to be saying, "Next year, for sure... bigger and better!"

It's all very beautiful, but was this just a single, once-off experience to be enjoyed by South African Jewry? Is it back to our old selves now?

I believe every South African Jew, whether he was able to keep Shabbos Lech Lecha in its entirety or not, became a changed Jew at nightfall on the 12th of October. The event touched us and transformed us.

The accounts about the warm and amazing feelings that the Shabbos Project engendered are inspiring. But let me share with you what has really given me strength in the past few weeks. It is the many stories of individuals who have, quietly, committed to some form of ongoing improvement in their own level of keeping Shabbos.

Some have told me they will stop working, even if they cannot commit to actually observing the laws of Shabbos in full. I have heard of people who will no longer use their telephones for the duration of Shabbos, or refrain from watching TV. They are those who have undertaken to come to Shul more frequently than they used to, or to no longer drive their car.

I urge each one of you who is reading this to stop, think and reflect on how the Shabbos Project touched and changed you. Make a commitment to do something more, something better, something more meaningful.

The Shabbos Jew is a different person not just on Shabbos but all week long. May the glow of Shabbos indeed remain with you, not just every Shabbat of the coming year but every single day

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I often think of how the mothers and fathers of the shtetel sent their children off. I wonder how they said goodbye. They were not able to message them to find out how the trip was. In fact, often, they did not know if they had arrived at all. They could not speak to them regularly or be a part of their new lives and for sure they could not Skype. I don't know how they survived.

These days we can speak to our faraway children every day if we want. We can see pictures as events occur. We can even see into their homes and watch what they are doing. Although we can't hug the phone, we can't smell the baby shampoo and we can't play with them or share a meal we are still so blessed.

Technology makes our blessings more real. We have so much to be thankful for. We are so filled with gratitude.

Have a good month.

Rivky

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00
<i>04/11 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00</i>	
<i>03/12 & 04/12 (Rosh Chodesh): 7:00</i>	

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
Friday	5:45
<i>29/11 (Chanukah): 6:00</i>	
Shabbat	6:00
from 30/11	6:15

DVAR TORAH**THE TEFILLIN BOMBER**

*By Rabbi Benjamin Blech
(aish.com)*

At first I thought the call was a prank.

The caller identified himself as a reporter for the Associated Press. He asked if it would be all right for a TV crew to come meet with me immediately and do an interview that would be sent to all their national affiliates. Timing was crucial, he said. The story was breaking just now and it was headline news. They really needed a rabbi for background information.

"What's it all about?" I innocently asked.

"Didn't you hear?" the reporter breathlessly responded. "A plane has been diverted on its flight from LaGuardia Airport due to a possible terrorist attack from a Jewish passenger."

Okay, I said to myself, *what's the punchline?* I know that flying isn't as safe as it used to be. I'm well aware of the shoe bomber and the underwear bomber but without overstepping the boundaries of political correctness I realized I was missing a piece of vital information when the caller suggested that there was threat of a terrorist attack from one of our people. A Jew threatening to bring down a plane? I knew in my gut that couldn't be true.

Sure enough, it was a false alarm. The passenger who gave the crew a fright was indeed Jewish. In fact it was a young man who was religiously observant. But it turned out no one really had any reason to be afraid. The teenager only wanted to recite his morning prayers while wearing the required *tefillin*, the biblically commanded boxes to be placed on the arm and the head - known in English as

phylacteries. The first is bound round the arm seven times to indicate devotion to G-d for all the days of the week and then around the fingers in a manner that spells out one of the names of the Almighty. The other, on the head, is a symbol of our willingness to subject our minds to the will of the one above us.

For someone who's never seen these religious items they can certainly appear strange. To the stewardess who alerted the captain to these foreign objects, with their unrecognizable black boxes and their unusual attached strings, they represented a potential danger strong enough to warrant the plane making a forced landing in Philadelphia to be welcomed by FBI agents, the police and the fire department.

Remarkably enough on a flight from New York City, one of the major Jewish population centers in the world, not one person on board had ever seen *tefillin*, or could vouch for their authenticity as a mitzvah rather than a menace!

So the Associated Press came to ask me about this ritual which I explained has been around for more than 3000 years. While the Pilgrim fathers who were all extremely conversant with the Bible would surely have known the meaning and the makeup of these phylacteries, meant to afford a measure of spiritual protection to its wearers, our contemporary guardians of national security unfortunately had no idea of this Torah law. At least, I thought to myself, the one good thing to come out of this unfortunate incident that inconvenienced unwary passengers and temporarily mistook a pious Jew for a terrorist was the G-d-given opportunity to explain a mitzvah to a national audience on TV.

Yet in retrospect I can't help but reflect on the irony that of all ritual objects it was *tefillin* that caused the crew to suspect a threat that would endanger the lives of innocent people. After all, it is this very mitzvah that on a more profound level speaks to the issue that represents the greatest challenge today to the civilized world.

The *tefillin* is a ritual item comprised of two parts. In its own way it symbolically says that our devotion to G-d consists of a dual commitment. It is an idea that has a remarkable precedent in the 10 Commandments when G-d gave the fundamental moral laws for all mankind not on one but on two separate tablets.

Why were these laws not written on one and the same tablet? Surely it was not for considerations of space. G-d could have made one tablet large enough to contain all 172 words of the Decalogue. The reason, as explained by the rabbis, is that this allowed G-d to introduce what many theologians have called perhaps the most important idea promulgated by Judaism, the most powerful innovation in the realm of religious thought. *Religion, this division of the tablets means to teach us, is concerned not only with the way in which mankind is meant to relate to G-d but also the way in which people are meant to treat each other.*

There are two tablets with five Commandments on each. The first five reflect upon our duties to G-d, the last five concern themselves with proper behavior towards our fellow man. *And it is both of these categories that are indivisibly included when we speak of religion!*

It was Cotton Mather, the famous Puritan preacher of colonial American times, who put it well when he once pithily said, "Woe unto those who

pray unto the Lord on Sundays and prey on their fellow man throughout the rest of the week." What was the source of his insight? The very point we see so clearly embedded in the structure of the 10 Commandments inscribed by G-d on the two different tablets of stone.

To accept only one of these categories as the definition of our striving for spiritual perfection is to be guilty of nothing less than religious schizophrenia.

As many contemporary theologians and philosophers have pointed out, the greatest danger to Western civilization today comes from those who in the name of G-d are willing to murder innocents, and to use suicide bombers as missiles to massacre civilians in a perverted attempt to glorify the Almighty.

The two tablets stand as irrefutable testaments to the sacredness of both G-d and man, the Creator and his creations, the One in the heavens above and all those representing his divine image below.

And where else other than in the two tablets is this message repeated, indeed on a daily basis? Of course in the very mitzvah of *tefillin*. The box to be placed on our head symbolizes our aspirations to be connected with the one above. It corresponds to the first tablet and all of its injunctions relating to our responsibilities to G-d. The box we are taught to place on our arm with the strings wound round our hand remind us to reach out to others, to fulfill all those religious obligations that mark our humanity in our relationships with others. It is the symbolic link to the message of the second tablet which is just as important in the eyes of Law Giver of Sinai.

"When do Jews put on these *tefillin*?" the interviewer asked me. I explained that whenever Jews recite morning prayers every weekday we need to remind ourselves of the two messages of the tablets. We speak to G-d and don the little box we put on our heads remind us that He exists, that He runs the world, and that He must be acknowledged and worshiped. But even as we do so we emphasize with a box on our hands that true service of G-d includes reaching out to all of His children. It reaffirms our commitment never to do anything to harm fellow human beings with the absurd rationalization that our intent is solely to glorify G-d. It is the combination of these two that define us. Respect for G-d and concern for His children are the hallmarks of Judaism. Which is why no Jew true to his name and his mission could ever be guilty of endangering the lives of innocents in the name of his religious beliefs.

With perhaps a hidden touch of heavenly humor, the plane with the teenager on board whose *tefillin* terrified the security personnel was diverted to, of all places, Philadelphia. The nickname of that city, based on the Greek root of the word, is "the city of brotherly love." How appropriate in a way that the end of this story was at a metropolis whose very identity is synonymous with the goal of the mitzvah that caused all the misunderstanding. After all, brotherly love is the divine purpose behind the law of the phylacteries which the young man attempted so scrupulously to fulfill. And far from being a cause for concern isn't it true that if *tefillin* and its message were properly understood and practiced, it would make the threat of terrorism and suicide bombers a universally longed-for impossibility?

MAZAL TOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Cynthia Katz on the birth of a grandson
- Tzvi and Chaya Wolvovsky and Rabbi and Rivky Chaikin on the birth of a daughter and granddaughter in New York
- Dani & Tarryn Sacher and Frank & Mirah Wilks on the birth of a son and grandson in Melbourne

BAR/BATMITZVAHS

- Dinah Levinson on the barmitzvah of her grandson in Cape Town
- Gerald and Shoshana Kaplan on the barmitzvah of their grandson, in London on 26th October
- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter in Jerusalem

- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the batmitzvah of their granddaughter in London on 30th November

WEDDINGS

- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the wedding of their grandson in Jerusalem on 3rd November

BIRTHDAYS

- Caron Ann Koonin on her 45th birthday on 1st November
- Howard Manoim on his 45th birthday on 4th November
- Gil Lang on his 45th birthday on 10th November
- Janette Vlodaver on her 75th birthday on 21st November
- Sidney Abramowitch on his 90th birthday on 30th November

ANNIVERSARIES

- Hymie and Judith Feinberg on their 55th anniversary on 30th November

REFUAH SHLEMAH

We wish a Speedy Recovery to:



- Henry Ulfane
- Solly Burgin
- Judith Feinberg
- Marion Rapp
- Mackie Brodie
- Myrna Kaplan

BEREAVEMENTS

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



Earle and Gillien Saks and Karen Sundy on the death of their son and brother, Mark Saks

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 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.



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GOOD LUCK TO ALL THOSE WRITING EXAMS

May your hard work be recognised and rewarded!