

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

November 2018

Kislev 5779

### SHABBAT TIMES

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

16 & 17 November – 9 Kislev  
Vayeitzei  
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:09

23 & 24 November – 16 Kislev  
Vayishlach  
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:15

30 Nov./1 Dec. – 23 Kislev  
Vayeishev  
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:21

7 & 8 December – 30 Kislev  
Miketz  
🕒 6:15 – 🕒 7:26

### RABBI'S MESSAGE

My first visit to Squirrel Hill was way back in 1985, when I spent an evening there for a good friend's wedding. I was there for very short—I had to fly out early the next morning as Rivky and I were scheduled to receive a personal blessing from the Rebbe ("Yechidus") the next day back in Brooklyn, ahead of our own marriage a few weeks later. But even on a such a short visit, I was taken by the aura of the suburb: warm, relaxed, friendly and welcoming.

Two years ago our son Chaim married a Pittsburgher and we thus had the opportunity to spend a bit longer in Squirrel Hill, including an amazing, memorable Shabbat. The

most hospitable Chabad community opened their homes to us (we were, k.a.h., quite a crowd)—some old friends but also total strangers—for accommodation, hosted Sheva Brochos and overall made us feel really welcome. The whole family was together for the simcha and it was a most idyllic setting for this celebration.

Against the backdrop of my personal memories of celebrations and serenity, the horror of that Shabbat morning at Tree of Life, a couple of weeks ago, was even more shocking. PG may all the injured recover fully and speedily and may all those bereft find comfort.

America has moved on. The mid-term elections took over the headlines. Then along came another mass shooting and from Pittsburgh, the news networks moved on to Thousand Hills, California.

Jews around the world are still shaking, unable to move on. We devour every news report or editorial on the subject. I must have read dozens. I share with you in this newsletter one that really touched me, written by a Squirrel Hill based journalist—a poignant

depiction of the concept of 'pintele yid'.

So how do we go forward? Paralysis and panic will not help. Too few responded to the #ShowUpForShabat campaign... Apathy? Fear?

Thank G-d here in South Africa we are blessed with the CSO, whose motto is to "preserve Jewish life and the Jewish way of life." They came out in full force to protect our synagogues in the aftermath, so that we could continue worshipping uninterrupted. A huge kudos to them. May I also ask all of you to step up to the plate and to volunteer for duty on Shabbat. For those of you who are apprehensive and unsure what this entails training sessions are available and can be arranged.

We are also lucky that our Board of Deputies monitors and follows up on anti-Semitism in this country and that South Africa actually has laws against hate speech, giving the Board the teeth with which to act when such incidents occur.

May Hashem bless and preserve all of us, in South Africa and around the World.

Yes, and please #ShowUpForShul!.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

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**FROM THE PRESS**


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***A secular prayer for my neighbors in Squirrel Hill***

*By Stephen Heyman*

My wife, Yana, and I moved to the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Squirrel Hill from Paris in the fall of 2015. Technically we are Jewish, but the only thing we did religiously up to that point was eat smoked fish. We never went to synagogue and had not been bar or bat mitzvahed. I'm not sure we had any idea of what being Jewish meant.

We rented our house sight unseen. We didn't even realize Squirrel Hill was a Jewish enclave until we met our first Orthodox neighbor, Rochel, a hippie-ish mother of three who swept up her chestnut hair in fluorescent headscarves. "Welcome to the shtetl!" she said, and invited us to our first Pittsburgh Shabbat dinner.

That November, in our new kitchen, Yana and I watched the news as the attacks unfolded in Paris. We felt a mixture of grief and relief, wanting to return in solidarity to a city that had become a second home, but also grateful that we had landed in a place that seemed so removed from international terrorism, so safe, particularly for Jews. "If you're frum," one neighbor told us, using the Yiddish word for observant, "Pittsburgh is paradise."

I had always deluded myself into believing that being Jewish was an option, like being an occasional

vegetarian, something I could switch on or off.

At our next Shabbat dinner, I was talking to my new friend Sruli, who lived two doors down. He plays harmonica in a Jewish-flavored funk band — yes, such things exist here. I asked if he had ever been to France. "I don't think they'd like me over there," he said.

"Why not?"

He grabbed his orange beard and gestured to his yarmulke. "Because of this, dude."

The Shabbat invitations kept coming. We laughed when our neighbors showed up on our doorstep with a ram's horn to blow or palm fronds to shake, the rites of different holidays. We marveled at their numerous children, how joyfully they lost themselves in the minutiae of their faith, how generous they were with food and gifts, though none of them were wealthy.

Soon other sides of the community came into view. On Saturday afternoon runs, we'd pass Orthodox boys coming home from shul with their starter-set earlocks, shirts untucked and broad-brimmed hats nattily tipped to the side. We'd see Conservative Jews, fathers and daughters, walking to synagogue in modern suits and fancy dresses. And we'd see Reform and secular Jews buying challah from the artisan bakery, Five Points, rather than the kosher supermarket.

Our next-door neighbor happened to be a rabbi who

moonlights as an IT guy. Or vice versa. Izzy, short for Yisroel, is an extremely charming man, with a giant gray beard, who dresses in a chic remix of Ellis Island immigrant garb, including suspenders and a newsboy cap. One day he knocked on our door, garden shears in hand. He wanted to cut a hedge that was spilling from our yard into his. Also, he said, "I lost my father."

He delivered the news without sentimentality. There was protocol to fall back on: the shiva (the first seven days of mourning) and the shloshim (the extended grieving period); and preparations would need to be accelerated because of the onset of Sukkot, the harvest celebration. There was also a bris, the ritual circumcision, for yet another grandson. He set to work on the hedge.

Yana and I often talked about how unlike ourselves these Jews seemed — as if they stepped out of an Isaac Bashevis Singer story. Then came a night last year, when my wife's mother was very sick — her oncologist had told us the worst possible news — and my father-in-law begged us to ask Izzy the rabbi/IT guy to say a prayer for her.

"Seriously?" I asked Yana. We felt awkward; we had kept the illness private. Yana knocked on the door. I stood behind her.

Izzy was asleep. His wife, Karen, mother of 10, born in South Africa, answered. Again, no sentimentality —

just kindness. "What's your mother's Hebrew name?" she asked.

We told her that Yana's mother had no Hebrew name, that she had been born in Soviet Ukraine, where Judaism was all but banned. Karen nodded. She promised that Izzy would say a prayer the following day. I'm not sure what, but that meant something to my father-in-law. It meant something to us, too.

Since the shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue on Saturday morning, I've been wanting to say a prayer for my Jewish friends in Pittsburgh. Such prayers are hurled about the internet with alarming facility, but I don't really believe in God, and I don't know how to invoke a negative space.

Without prayers, all I have are thoughts. I've lately been thinking about the different kinds of Judaism: my kind, Izzy and Karen's kind; the mystical, Klezmer-playing Sruli's kind; the kind practiced by the 11 murdered at Tree of Life; the kind embraced by the Reform families who get their challah from the hipster bakeshop, which is just down the street from that synagogue where so much is now broken. I want to believe there is something more than a painful history uniting us, something more than a genetic marker and the possibility of wandering into the crosshairs of some maniac's gun.

I've also, curiously, been thinking about former New York Mayor Ed Koch's

tombstone, how he inscribed it with Daniel Pearl's dying words: "My father is Jewish, my mother is Jewish, I am Jewish."

What a strange thing to put on your grave, I once thought, so intense, so tribal. But now I understand better. I had always deluded myself into believing that being Jewish was an option, like being an occasional vegetarian, something I could switch on or off, depending on the situation. The closer the attacks come, the less I feel that way.

Pearl affirmed his identity in the face of unspeakable hatred. I don't have that kind of courage, but I suspect the people of Squirrel Hill do. As for the other stuff that will keep us together, the open doors and shared meals? That's just neighborliness, which has no religious affiliation, and at certain moments can feel a lot like grace.

*Stephen Heyman is a freelance journalist based in Pittsburgh. This article appeared in the LA Times on 29 October.*

## SERVICE TIMES

### SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday and Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:00

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

Sunday to Thursday	6:15
Friday	5:45
Shabbat from 1/12	6:00 6:15

## DVAR TORAH

### THE MONTH OF KISLEV

(chabad.org)

Kislev is the ninth month on the Jewish calendar, counting from Nissan. It is best known for the holiday of Chanukah, which begins on 25 Kislev. The message of Chanukah is the eternal power of light over darkness—good over evil. Aside from commemorating the miraculous victory of the small Jewish army over the mighty Syrian-Greek empire, Chanukah celebrates the miracle of the oil. When the Jews sought to light the Temple menorah after the war, they found only one small jug of pure oil. Miraculously, the one-day supply burned for eight days, and the sages instituted the eight-day festival of Chanukah, on which we kindle the menorah nightly.

In this month we celebrate the redemption of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad Chassidism, who had been imprisoned on false charges by the czarist regime. These charges were reflective of spiritual charges brought against him for openly teaching the deepest insights of Torah. On the 19th of Kislev, he was freed, paving the way both physically and spiritually to continue teaching Chassidism. This day is referred to as the "New Year of Chassidism."

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Maxine & Ariel Geffen and Barry Speigel on the birth of a son and grandson in Israel.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Flory Mencer on her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on the 1<sup>st</sup> November.
- Caron Koonin on her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 1<sup>st</sup> November.

- Howard Manoim on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 4<sup>th</sup> November.
- Willie Wittert on his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday on the 9<sup>th</sup> November.
- Gil Lang on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 10<sup>th</sup> November.

- Janette Vlodaver on her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November.

- Gary Schach on his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November.

**ANNIVERSARIES**

- Hymie & Judith Feinberg on their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the 30<sup>th</sup> November.

**REFUAH SHLEIMA**

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Blima Nudelman

**BEREAVEMENTS**



We wish long life to




- Robert Soicher on the death of his mother, Monica.

May Hashem comfort them and their families among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem and grant them long life.

## CHANUKAH CANDLE LIGHTING SCHEDULE






 Sunday, 2 December - Light first candle at 7:15 p.m.






  Monday, 3 December - Light candles at 7:15 p.m.

   Tuesday, 4 December - Light candles at 7:15 p.m.

    Wednesday, 5 December - Light candles at 7:15 p.m.

    Thursday, 6 December - Light candles at 7:15 p.m.

     Friday, 7 December - Light the Chanukah candles first (after 5:25 p.m.), then the Shabbat candles. Make sure the Chanukah candles are long enough (or sufficient oil is used) so that they will burn until at least 7:55 p.m.

      Saturday, 8 December - Light candles only after Shabbat is out (7:26 p.m.) and after Havdalah

      Sunday, 9 December - Light candles at 7:20 p.m.

*Always place the candles on the right of the Chanukiyah. When lighting, kindle from left to right (the newest candle first)  
All times are for the Johannesburg area only. Please inquire about local times if you are elsewhere.*