

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER October 2019 Tishrei 5780

SHABBAT TIMES

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

11 & 12 October – 13 Tishrei
🕒 Haazinu
🕒 5:54 – 🕒 6:44

18 & 19 October – 20 Tishrei
Chol Hamoed Sukkot
🕒 5:58 – 🕒 6:48

25 & 26 October – 27 Tishrei
🕒 Bereshit
🕒 6:02 – 🕒 6:52

1 & 2 November – 4 Cheshvan
🕒 Noach
🕒 6:06 – 🕒 6:58

8 & 9 November – 11 Cheshvan
🕒 Lech Lecha
🕒 6:11 – 🕒 7:03

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Here I sit on the morrow of the holiest of all days, trying to recover from the marathon that has been the last ten days. Everyone I have spoken to in the last 24 hours, at the family breaking of the fast last night, people I have met, family members across the oceans or callers to the shul office, has asked the same question, "So how was Yomtov at Oxford?"

So here I am, pondering what the correct answer is to that. I think it depends on what people had in mind when they inquired.

Did they want to know how many souls we accommodated? The answer is that for most services we had very respectable numbers—several hundred at times, which may look a bit sparse in

a 1600-seater synagogue but is a considerable congregation nonetheless.

Was the question about the quality of the liturgical renditions? Thank G-d we are blessed with a Chazan, Tzvi Gudelsky, who has a most melodious voice and is able to produce an amazing sound even when not accompanied by a choir. And let us not forget our Chazan Sheni, Velvy Bokov.

I do not think they were asking me about the delivery of sermons. It would be difficult for me to give an unbiased opinion on that one. The community needs to be the judge of that, although I sincerely hope that congregants were inspired.

Perhaps people want to know if the many requests they put to their Maker will be responded to positively. Only Hashem knows the answer to this—all we can do is continue to daven....

At the end of the day, or should I say Ten Days, none of the above criteria, individually or combined, make for a successful High Holiday season. The defining and definitive question is this: "Do I feel closer to Hashem at the end of Yom Kippur than I did at the beginning of Elul? Was I personally uplifted and inspired?"

This is of course not a question I can answer, but which I urge each one of you who attended Oxford (or another synagogue) to pose to

yourself. Although the Shul service has a significant part to play in this, it is mostly about your own readiness to absorb, grow and change.

By the time this reaches you, we will be getting ready to celebrate Sukkot, the festival of joy, or already in the midst of its observance. This jam-packed month of major holidays has two components. The first half is referred to as Days of Awe (awe: *noun*; a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear) and are serious, bordering on the sombre, even if they are meant to be celebrated joyfully.

On the fifteenth day of this month of Tishrei, the seven-day Feast of the Tabernacles (=Sukkot) begins. It is about worshipping Hashem with pure happiness. This is followed by Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, two additional days of unadulterated delight.

I invite you to partake in the full Tishrei experience. Do not quit halfway and then wonder why you were not elevated to new heights of spirituality. This is a journey which must be taken through the full itinerary to get you to the destination.

Looking forward to see you in Shul over the Season of Joy. Refreshments follow all yomtov services (Sunday 13/10 in the evening, Monday 14/10 morning and evening, Tuesday 15/10 in the morning) as well as on the Shabbat of Sukkot (18/10 in the evening and 19/10 in the morning).

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I stood in the big shul on the first night of Rosh Hashanah. I was so happy to be there. I love the energy of the shul, the majesty, the serenity.

I put my hand on the rail and sighed. It could really do with a coat of paint or varnish. There are places where the carpet has worn down. And the bathrooms... well they are old: old-fashioned toilets, old fashioned taps, sinks stained with water marks from years of use.

Suddenly it dawned on me that the paint on the rails is rubbed out because so many people have held onto them as they swayed in prayer; the carpets are worn down because so many people have tramped on them as they found their seats.

The majesty of the room is truly that so many prayers have found their way to heaven through this place. The beauty of this place is in fact the old. It is the old that connects us. The old is the majesty. The old is the serenity. The Grand Old Dame called Oxford Shul.

Rivky

SERVICE TIMES**SHACHARIT (A.M.)**

Sunday & Public Holidays 8:00

20/10 (Hoshana Rabba): 7:45

Monday to Friday 6:45

14/10 & 15/10 (Sukkot): 9:00

16/10, 17/10 & 18/10 (Chol Hamoed): 7:00

21/22 (Shemini Atzeret): 9:00

22/10 (Simchat Torah): 9:00

Shabbat & Festivals 9:00

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Thursday 6:00

from 03/11 6:15

Friday 5:45

Shabbat 5:45

from 02/11 6:00

DVAR TORAH**A SUKKAH GROWS
IN BROOKLYN**

*by Rabbi Ron Yitchok
Eisenman and Bracha Goetz
(aish.com)*

**When neighbors band
together, a small miracle
happens in Canarsie, NY.**

When I was 15 years old, I really wanted a sukkah. There was one at our synagogue, but I dreamed of having my own sukkah.

I asked my parents if we could have a sukkah of our own, but my parents said, "No, maybe next year, but not this year." I was disappointed.

But then, on the night before Sukkot, my parents told me that they had asked friends of theirs about their old sukkah. The friends told my parents that they had the wooden frame from their old sukkah in their garage and that I was welcome to use it to build a sukkah.

I could hardly sleep that night after hearing this great news.

Early in the morning, I headed to my parents' friends' garage and carried back all the pieces of wood I needed to build the frame of the sukkah.

When I got all the wood home, I realized that even if I somehow managed to put it together, all I would have

was the frame for a wall-less sukkah. And there were only 10 hours left to go before Sukkot.

But the dream was too wonderful for me to give up, so I got to work. I banged a nail here and cut a piece of wood there, as I prayed for my sukkah to grow.

At about 11 AM while I was banging away, my Israeli neighbor, Yossi, walked by. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"I'm building a sukkah," I replied.

Yossi quickly ran home and returned in a flash with a proper hammer and a working saw. "At the rate you're going, you'll finish by Passover. Move over and let me give you a hand." For the first time in the history of East 82 Street in Canarsie, Brooklyn, the sounds of sukkah building were heard in the air.

After awhile, another neighbor, Lenny Waldman, walked by and asked, "What you guys doing?"

"We're building a sukkah," I said.

Lenny looked at us and asked, "What's going to be the roof for your little sukkah?" Suddenly I realized that in the rush to build the sukkah I had forgotten about the most important part – its special kind of roof!

"I don't know, but we will think of something. We need something which grows which won't wither during the eight day holiday." Lenny, who was a quiet man, said nothing as he disappeared into his house.

A few moments later, he reappeared with a ladder and a large pair of shears. He began to cut large branches from the huge evergreen tree in my front yard. "I always wondered why you let it grow so large," Lenny said aloud, as he continued to buzz the tree.

Henry Gordon, who lived with his 92-year-old mother and drove a cab in the city, was parking his cab as he heard Lenny cutting my large evergreen tree. "Lenny, what you doing?" he asked.

"The young fellow next door is building a sukkah and I am helping him out with covering," he replied.

"Well, the frame looks okay, but what are they using for walls?" Henry asked.

"Beats me," said Lenny, "Ask the kid."

"What about the walls? Where are they?" Henry asked me.

"I don't know, I guess I'll grab some old sheets and tack them to the frame."

Henry looked at Yossi, the Israeli builder. He glanced at Lenny, the tree-trimmer and then he said, "I have an idea, I'll be back soon."

Ten minutes later, he reappeared pushing a wheelbarrow full of doors. "When I drive around the city, anytime I see an old door, I stop the cab and throw it in the trunk. I don't know why, but I've been doing it for years. Let me donate them as walls for your sukkah".

Yossi, Henry and I began to attach the doors to the frame and as the sun began to move downward in the sky, my sukkah began to stand up.

Murray Cohen was the last neighbor to come across the street. "Hey, what are you all doing?" he asked. Then he answered his own question. "Hey it looks like you're building a sukkah. Wow, I've never seen one of those around Canarsie."

Murray looked at the motley crew and said, "Wait one minute. I have something for you," and he ran across the street to his house.

He returned with a large sheet of green felt. "I fix pool tables for a living, and when they redo the old tables they give me the old green felt. I have no use for it but I think if we staple the felt to the

doors it will give the sukkah a real homey feeling."

Soon Murray was stapling felt across the doors as Lenny put the finishing touches on the evergreen roof and Yossi, the sukkah builder, hammered in the final nail.

It was 6 PM. Candle lighting was just minutes away, but as I looked at Lenny, Yossi, Henry and Murray and then at my sukkah, I saw that sometimes dreams do come true.

That night, as I was about to make Kiddush in my sukkah with my family, there was a knock on the sukkah door. In walked Lenny who said, "Hey, looks pretty cozy in here."

Soon Henry appeared, explaining that he was simply admiring his handiwork, followed by Yossi and Murray who both said, "Let's see how this sukkah really works."

As I recited Kiddush, I glanced at the faces of Yossi, Lenny, Murray and Henry, proudly standing in my dream sukkah.

Many years have passed since then and even though I now have a large, roomy sukkah, I fondly remember the most beautiful, precious sukkah I ever had – my first sukkah, the one we all built together.

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

ENGAGEMENT

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the engagement of their grandson Mendy Sarchi to Lauren Vituli.

BIRTHDAYS

- Philip Altbeker on his 84th birthday on the 6th October.
- Sam Benard on his 85th birthday on the 27th October.

ANNIVERSARIES

- Leonard & Leora Berger on their 52nd anniversary on the 1st October.

BEREAVEMENTS

We wish long life to :

- Frank Wilks, Tarryn Sacher and Brett Wilks on the death of their wife and mother, Mirah.

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



Book **NOW** for the
SIMCHAT TORAH DINNER
 On Monday night, 21 October

Only R95 per person

Book by email info@oxfordshul.com or phone/WhatsApp 011 646-6020r

