

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER October 2021 Cheshvan 5782

ד'תשפ"ב

SHABBAT TIMES

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

8 & 9 October – 3 Cheshvan

🕒 Noach

🕒 5:53 – 🕒 6:43

15 & 16 October – 10 Cheshvan

🕒 Lech Lecha

🕒 5:56 – 🕒 6:47

22 & 23 October – 17 Cheshvan

🕒 Vayeira

🕒 6:00 – 🕒 6:51

29 & 30 October – 24 Cheshvan

🕒 Chayei Sarah

🕒 6:05 – 🕒 6:56

RABBI'S MESSAGE

By Rosh Hashanah 2021, things will be back to normal, they all said. People are hungry for social interaction, they said; as soon as it will be safe to gather again, they will all come flocking back. Just offer them food, they said, everyone will be there to eat.

The Yomim Tovim came and the Yomim Tovim went. Back to normal it was not. Thank G-d, people came, in numbers far exceeding last year, albeit with many still hesitant. We had a lunch on Simchat Torah (read more about it in Rebbetzin's column)—suffice it to say that the Shul's garden can fit a few dozen more, even with ample and safe social distancing.

But together we celebrated. Thinking back, a most memorable Yom Tov season. Enjoying the delightful singing of my son, Chazan Betzalel (even if I say so). Scrambling to fit everyone when the maximum legal attendance was 50. Breathing a sigh of relief when the President extended that number to 250 in time for Yom Kippur. Relocating to the foyer for Neilah when the lights failed in the main Shul. Then of course Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret and finally Simchat Torah.

In so many ways, the past month exceeded many of my expectations.

Now it is time to say thank you. Firstly, to this most amazing community that made it happen. Thank you for your participation in the shul's activities, whether in person or online platforms. Thank you for your ongoing support and generosity. And thank you for your ongoing show of appreciation for what Oxford is doing during this most unusual period.

We thank Hashem for having brought us to this time and allowed us to experience Tishrei 5782/2021. And we pray to Him that we are blessed to experience many more Yomim Tovim, in good health, which will continue to exceed expectations even further.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

I am not completely sure why I feel so totally wiped, after a month of holidays!

Yes, this year, with the way the calendar worked—yom tov in the middle of the week—was a continuous cycle of cook, clean, eat (and daven a bit) and then begin again.

The part I enjoyed the most was the lunch in the garden on Simchat Torah. With all protocols in place, it was such a good feeling to be together and in the beautiful garden again. A tiny taste of normalcy. PG we pray for a year ahead of good health and safety for everyone as we slowly and carefully begin to see each other again.

Many years ago I heard someone sigh at the conclusion of yom tov and say, "Gosh, now it is just six months until Pesach."

So for any of you who feel that way, start cleaning now! But really, that is not how we are meant to be thinking. It is most trendy to live in the moment. Mindfulness is the catch phrase of our time. Right now we must work on taking the inspiration we got during the holy month of Tishrei and apply it to our lives.

Who would like to come for Shabbat?

Have a good month.

Rivky

DVAR TORAH***Sehmita: The Sabbatical Year***

(chabad.org)

Absolution of loans, desisting from all field work, and the spiritual objective of all the above

Like the seventh day of the week, every seventh year is holy. The Shemitah (Sabbatical) year is a year devoted to strengthening our bond with G-d—specifically, honing our faith in His omnipotence and our trust in His kindness.

The current year, 5782 (September 7, 2021—September 25, 2022) is a Shemitah year.

Give Your Friend a Break

At the end of seven years you will make a release. And this is the manner of the release: to release the hand of every creditor from what he lent his friend; he shall not exact from his friend or his brother, because the time of the release for the L-rd has arrived. (Deuteronomy 15:1–2)

The Shemitah year waives all outstanding debts between Jewish debtors and creditors.

[Nowadays, a halachic mechanism called pruzbul circumvents this loan amnesty.

This aspect of Shemitah observance is known as shemitat kesafim, “release of money [debts].”

Take a Break from Farming

For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in its produce. But in the seventh year, the land shall have a complete rest, a Sabbath to the L-rd; you shall not sow your field, you shall not prune your vineyard, nor shall you reap the aftergrowth of your harvest . . . And [the produce of] the Sabbath of the land shall be yours to eat for you, for your male and female servants, and for your hired worker and resident who live with you... (Leviticus 25:3–6)

During the Shemitah year, the residents of the Land of Israel must completely desist from cultivating their fields. They also relinquish personal ownership of their fields; whatever produce grows on its own is considered communal property, free for anyone to take.

This aspect of the Shemitah year is known as shemitat karka, “release of the land.”

Refocus

In the ancient Israeli agrarian culture, the Shemitah year proved to be a difficult challenge for the people’s collective trust in the Creator, the One who bequeathed them the land of milk and honey.

And if you should say, “What will we eat in the seventh year? We will not sow, and we will not gather in our produce!” (Leviticus 25:20)

Yet those who put their trust in G-d were richly rewarded:

I, [G-d,] will command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will yield produce for three years. And you will sow in the eighth year, while still eating from the old crops. Until the ninth year, until the arrival of its crop, you will eat the old crop! (Leviticus 25:21–22)

As well as giving the people an opportunity to put their faith in G-d and see it fulfilled, the year-long abstention from farming also allowed them to collectively take a breather and focus on higher, more spiritual pursuits—as the people packed the synagogues and study halls. Even today, when the vast majority of Jews are not involved in the farming industry, the lessons of Shemitah are very germane. During this holy year we are expected to concentrate more on our spiritual mission in life, and a little less on our material pursuits. More on why we are needed, less on what we need. More on faith in G-d, less on faith in our own talents and wiles.

SERVICE TIMES

In person services have resumed but we are gradually building up to having all services every day of the week.

Please check with the office if you wish to come to shul on a particular day to ensure there will be a service.

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday & Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Friday	6:00
Shabbat	5:45

A STORY

The Muddy Path to Paradise (chabad.org)

A certain chassidic rebbe had a custom of visiting various Jewish communities, where he would stay in the homes of his wealthy chassidim.

In one of the cities that the rebbe would visit, there lived a wealthy chassid. Although he considered himself a follower of the rebbe and owned a large mansion with many rooms, whenever he heard of the rebbe's arrival in his city, he made sure that his mansion was locked. Well aware of his rebbe's tendency to stay at the homes of the wealthy, where there was ample room to welcome the masses who clamored to consult with him, the chassid would hurriedly leave his mansion, disguising his aversion to hosting as a last-minute business trip. He preferred that his house be left alone.

The suddenness of the rebbe's appearance in his city caught the chassid, along with his wide-open mansion, off guard. Left with no choice, he reluctantly surrendered his house so that it could serve as the rebbe's accommodation.

A few days later, the rebbe asked the chassid a very frank question: "Tell me the truth, are you not happy with the fact that I am here?"

"Nonsense, Rebbe. You are my most esteemed guest," replied the chassid earnestly. "I am thrilled to be hosting you and delighted that you chose to stay at my house. The problem I have does not lie with you but

rather with the chassidim. You see, when you come, they come. And when they come, along comes the muck from the streets. The very thought of all that grime on my clean floors and furniture just horrifies me.

It was never because of you, G-d forbid. But the idea of the mud has always been off-putting to me."

Instead of addressing the man's complaint directly, the rebbe responded with a story:

"There once lived a pharmacist who, as an avid sinner, managed to transgress almost all of the Torah's prohibitions. After a long life of pleasure, the pharmacist was greeted in heaven by the horde of prosecuting angels that he managed to create throughout his lifetime of sins. Their loud, emphatic accusations and protests challenged the heavens to find a sliver of virtue for his poor soul.

"Suddenly, an angel appeared before the heavenly court and began to tell an account of kindness that transpired in the pharmacist's youth: It once happened that a man's wagon, overloaded with merchandise, keeled over in the road. The horse was pinned to the ground and the wagon driver, unable to raise the upended wagon by himself, stood by helplessly as he waited for aid that did not seem to come. However, continued the angel, the young pharmacist happened to be traveling down the same road. And when the wagon driver's misfortune met his eyes, the pharmacist stopped to assist the grateful man. Only after the two successfully managed to

turn the overloaded cart so that it was upright on its wheels, did the pharmacist continue on his journey.

"Immediately after the angel concluded his story, a horse and wagon overloaded with merchandise were placed on the empty pan dangling from the supernal scale, which had been tilted heavily on the side of sins. Helped by the new weight, the balance shifted towards the center. But the lifetime of sins still outweighed the single good deed.

"We demand that the mud and soil be added to the scale as well," chorused the good angels. 'After all, he had to extract the wagon from the muck, didn't he?' But the prosecuting angels vehemently insisted that the pharmacist had nothing to do with the mud, which had no direct relevance to him. The heavenly court therefore decided to send the pharmacist's soul back to this world to determine whether mud holds any significance for his soul. If so, mud would be placed on the heavenly scale on the side of merits. But if not ..."

The rebbe paused his story and fixed his gaze on the chassid.

"You possess the soul of that pharmacist, and your evil inclination is working overtime not to allow that mud into your house."

Upon hearing these words from his rebbe, the chassid ran to the door and began pleading to the chassidim waiting outside. "Come in, come in," he cried. "Come as you are and greet our honored guest."

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Doris Samson on the birth of a great grandson in Jerusalem and a great granddaughter in Manchester.
- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great granddaughter in Johannesburg.

BIRTHDAYS

- Danny Sack on the occasion of his 55th birthday on the 10th October.
- Phillip Shifren on the occasion of his 75th birthday on the 14th October.

- Stanley Stein on the occasion of his 80th birthday on the 24th October.
- Hillel Kahn on the occasion of his 70th birthday on 26th October.

MARRIAGES

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the marriage of their grandson, Zevi Fox, to Shani Shaw, on 19th September.
- Shmuelly & Lisa Nudelman and Blima Nudelman on the marriage of their son and grandson, Elchanan, to Tali Nathan, on 19th September.
- Esme Utian on the marriage of her granddaughter, Dina Bloch to Naftali Garfinkel in Jerusalem on 30th September.
- Madeleine Fane on the marriage of her son Lawrence, to Alicia Zwiers, on 7th October in London.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:



- Merrick Brenner
- Aubrey Abkiewicz
- Sharon Margo

BEREAVEMENTS

We wish long life to

- Lewis Neuburger on the death of his wife, Carole.
- Lynda Gluck on the death of her father, Barney Gordon.
- Dora Knight on the death of her brother, Wilfred Ringo.

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

TOGETHER. WHOEVER. WHATEVER. WHEREVER.

The Shabbat Project

KEEPING IT TOGETHER

**Light.
Life.
Meaning.
Warmth.
Depth.**

22-23 October 2021