

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

October 2026

Cheshvan 5787

SHABBAT TIMES

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

16 & 17 October – 6 Cheshvan

🕯 Noach

🕯 5:57 – 🕯 6:47

23 & 24 October – 13 Cheshvan

🕯 Lech Lecha

🕯 6:01 – 🕯 6:52

30 & 31 October – 20 Cheshvan

🕯 Vayera

🕯 6:05 – 🕯 6:56

6 & 7 November – 27 Cheshvan

🕯 Chaye Sara

🕯 6:10 – 🕯 7:02

RABBI'S MESSAGE

You've probably all had the feeling. You're driving between cities, following the navigation on your phone. You left behind a busy network of streets, traffic lights and interchanges. The instructions came thick and fast: keep left, take the next exit, turn right, then turn left again.

Now there is just a blue line stretching up the screen. Nothing much on either side. The next instruction is more than a hundred kilometres away.

"Continue straight," says the familiar voice. Then silence.

You zoom out to see where you are. Then out again, until

a town you recognise finally appears. Yes, this is still the road to your destination. You zoom back in and carry on.

A few kilometres later, you find yourself doing it again.

It is reassuring to see the whole journey. That little blue line makes more sense when you can see where it came from and where it is taking you.

The past month of Tishrei was rather like driving through a big city. There was an instruction at every turn. Blow the shofar. Dip the apple in honey. Fast. Build a sukkah, then eat in it. Take the lulav in one hand and the etrog in the other. Walk around the bimah. Take a Torah and dance.

Our days were full of things to do, places to be and people to be with. Even someone who spends much of the year on the outskirts of Jewish life could hardly miss the signs. There was always another service, another meal, another occasion bringing us back to shul.

Then Tishrei ends, and the screen looks rather empty.

Cheshvan stretches ahead. Beyond it lie Kislev, Tevet, Shevat and Adar. Pesach seems a long way off. We are back at work, back at school, back to appointments,

errands and the ordinary business of living.

Continue straight.

During the festivals, the next mitzvah often announced itself. Now we have to pay closer attention. The blue line continues through an ordinary Tuesday, too: through the way we conduct our business, speak to our family, respond to someone who needs help, and make time for Torah and prayer.

These are the kilometres in which we put our Tishrei resolutions into practice. We asked for patience; now someone is testing it. We resolved to give more tzedakah; now there is an opportunity. We prayed for a closer relationship with Hashem; now we have to find a few minutes for Him in a crowded day.

It helps to zoom out occasionally.

A difficult morning can fill the whole screen. A deadline, a disagreement or a disappointment can seem to be the entire landscape. We need to step back far enough to remember where we are heading, and why we set out in the first place.

And there is more along this road than we might think.

On a long drive, the navigation may show little beyond the route itself. Look more closely and there are places with names like Buitenzorgdorp, Hartswater and Ntabegadlinkomo. They were there all along; we simply had not noticed them.

Our Jewish year has its smaller stopping places, too. Chanukah and Purim, of course, but also Tu Bishvat, the fasts and the other special days. Each offers something to learn, something to do, and a fresh reminder of where we are going.

Then, every seven days, comes Shabbat. A chance to put away the phone, stop watching the little moving arrow, and be fully present where we are. To sit at a table, come to shul, learn, sing and reconnect.

The road ahead may look quiet after Tishrei. There is still plenty of direction along the way.

Have a safe journey.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

P.S. Buitenzorgdorp is in the Cape Peninsula, Hartswater is a few kilometres North of Kimberley and Ntabegadlinkomo can be found in KwaZulu-Natal.

SERVICE TIMES SHACHARIT (A.M.)

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

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Friday	6:00
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FROM THE REBBETZIN

When I was growing up, there were no "kosher-enough" fish sticks. I looked with pure jealousy at my friends who could feast on fish sticks, either for an after-school snack or a children's dream dinner. In my head, they were delicious, crunchy pieces of fish—and I was (stupidly) so resentful of the freshly fried fish fingers we had to suffer through every Thursday night.

Fast forward to 2026. There are very kosher fish sticks in JHB these days. We were blessed with grandchildren visiting a few times this year. In my attempt to be the best grandmother ever, I filled my house, kitchen, and freezer with all types of treats. Among them were boxes of fish sticks. But only one grandchild appreciated them (a little). He called them "fish-niks" and ate them sometimes.

Tonight I made some for myself. I tried to remember how exciting they appeared to me. What a disappointment. Freshly fried fish fingers win this competition—no debate about that at all.

How typical of life this is. Imagining that which we can't have is super special, not realising that what we do have is really so superior!

Have a good month,

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

Finding G-d in the Mundane

*By Etti Krinsky
(Chabad.org)*

Hear that? It is silence.

The shofar isn't blowing, the guests have left, and the celebrations have quieted down.

Here we are. It is Cheshvan.

There is not a lot that is marked in the month of Cheshvan, but one thing that is commemorated is the mabul, the Great Flood that began in this month. A year later also in this month, the flood finally ended, the waters receded, the land dried, and it was once again safe for Noah and his family to leave the ark. But Noah didn't want to. Today, we all know the deep struggle that comes from isolation and being holed up in one place for a long time. We know what it feels like to see the same walls every day—to be surrounded by your family, and only your family, for days on end. Noah is holed up in a ship for an entire year, and when he is finally told that it is safe to emerge, he resists. He wants to stay. It gets to the point that G-d must specifically command Noah to leave the ship.

Why was Noah so resistant?

This is something I can relate to as well. While at the start of the COVID-19 lockdowns, I struggled to accept that we truly could not emerge from our homes, when it finally became safe to leave, it wasn't an easy step to take. The world was different; home had become a beacon of safety, there was a deep sense of ease in my life, and the pressure and complications of real-world living had slowed. The world seemed too much to step back into—overwhelming, overstimulating, complex and demanding. I wasn't all that interested in getting back out there.

Noah had just spent a year on a ship, safe from floodwaters and ruin, where nature was not in play. Every species on the planet had just lived together for a year in small quarters and thrived. Noah wanted to stay where nature did not have a role, where nature did not make things practical, realistic and dangerous. But G-d had to tell Noah a painful truth: The purpose of the world was waiting. The purpose of the world is not to live with miracles, above nature. It is to meet the world within its nature, to work with the world in its natural state.

In the month of Tishrei, we took off work, we prayed, we celebrated, and we were busy with higher purpose and holiness. If we were clever, we made sure to harness the inspiration to trickle down into the rest of the year. And now we are here. The rest of the year has begun, and we begin with a month that is empty of holidays, a month that is quiet. A month full of workdays and schooldays—run-of-the-mill, real, daily living.

And it's not just when we start our countdown to Chanukah. It is the time that we were created for. A time that G-d always intended for us. It is a time that exemplifies the real purpose of living—making Torah practical and real in our everyday lives, working with the people around us without the spiritual high.

Where do we see what it means to bring the spiritual into our everyday reality? Through the prayer for rain.

Half of Israel is a desert, and after a scorching summer, it desperately needs rain. The good news is that the rainy season begins as the holiday ends. Yet the prayer for rain is delayed by 15 days after the holidays (and even longer in the Diaspora). What possible reason would lead people living in a scorched, thirsty desert to delay their prayer? It is in consideration for those

traveling away from Jerusalem after the holiday. It would take 15 days for the Jew that lived farthest away to return home safely. Then, Israel begins to pray for rain.

How much more practical can you get? Delaying a prayer for the sake of the physical comfort of another Jew. This is Cheshvan. Noticing what it means to be a Jew, practically. Putting the spiritual into practice on a day-to-day level. The rain, the desert, our traveling brethren; it is all part of our service to G-d. Our strength in Cheshvan is that it is quiet, it is routine, and it is life in its essence. This Cheshvan, we have the power to take what seems mundane and reveal the true holiness hidden within nature.

It is not our human limitations that make us unworthy of G-d's presence; it is those inherent limitations that make us the perfect conduits to heal the world.



MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty
Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great-grandson, born to Mendy and Sara Malka Shishler in Johannesburg.
- Philip and Rilla Jacobson and to Jeanette Markovitz on the birth of a great-granddaughter, born to Daniel and Chasya Friedland in Johannesburg.
- Mazaltov to Russel Wolpe on the birth of a great-grandson.

- Mazaltov to Gertie Feinstein on the birth of a great-grandson in Toronto

BIRTHDAYS

- Danny Sack on his 60th birthday on 10th October.
- Hillel Kahn on his 75th birthday on 26th October.

ANNIVERSARIES

- Julius & Arlene Schneid on their 65th anniversary on 11th October.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a speedy
recovery to:

- Gertie Feinstein
- Philip Jacobson
- Clive Srimling

BEREAVEMENTS

We wish long life to

- Caroline Shone on the death of her father, Terrence Davis
- Hilary, Jonathan, Bryan and David Isakow on the passing of their husband and father, Raymond.
- The family of Fay Paul on her death.

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

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at the Shul on the occasion of a personal or family Simcha, to commemorate a Yartzeit, birthday or anniversary.

For details and bookings, contact the Shul office at
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