

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

September/October 2016

Elul 5776/Tishrei 5777

### SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting  
🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)  
For service times see page 2  
For Yom Tov times please see special  
Tishrei schedule

16 & 17 September – 14 Elul

🕒 Ki Teitzi

🕒 5:43 – 🕒 6:33

23 & 24 September – 21 Elul

🕒 Ki Tavo

🕒 5:46 – 🕒 6:36

30 Sept & 1 October – 28 Elul

🕒 Nitzavim

🕒 5:49 – 🕒 6:39

7 & 8 October – 6 Tishrei

🕒 Vayelech (Shabbat Shuva)

🕒 5:52 – 🕒 6:42

14 & 15 October – 13 Tishrei

🕒 Haazinu

🕒 5:56 – 🕒 6:46

21 & 22 October – 20 Tishrei

Chol Hamoed Sukkot

🕒 6:00 – 🕒 6:50

28 & 29 October – 27 Tishrei

🕒 Bereishit

🕒 5:52 – 🕒 6:42

4 & 5 November – 4 Cheshvan

🕒 Vayealech

🕒 5:52 – 🕒 6:42

### RABBI'S MESSAGE

I have travel on my mind. My family and I are on our way to the United States for our son Chaim's wedding.

The trip has required extensive preparation. First we had to book tickets and look for the best deal we could find (especially since

several of us were travelling). Then came the paperwork. Firstly we had to get the passports in order. Since Rivky and the children are dual citizens, this necessitated trips both to the United States Consulate General in Sandton and our own Home Affairs Offices (I could compare the two experiences but shall refrain as it is not correct to bite the hand that feeds you). Because my wife went ahead of me with the kids, the new regulations for travel with minors required copies of unabridged birth certificates, affidavits certifying that Rivky was not abducting the children without my permission and other documents.

Finally, the actual trip. There is little that is enjoyable about the actual trip. Of course the airline tries their best to make it the best experience possible, providing in-flight entertainment, meals and refresher hot towels. But we all know that the purpose of the flight is not the flight itself—it is the destination. To get to the other side, we endure many hours of restriction; all of which are quickly

forgotten when reunited with loved ones on the other side.

I have travel on my mind because as soon as I return from America we embark on another journey, similarly arduous, into the year 5777.

The trip has required extensive preparation. (No, I did not have to shop around for a Shul nor was I charged for my seats...) There was a month of Elul ahead of the High Holidays to get my affairs in order, to search through my deeds, speech and even thoughts to make sure I was not packing along anything that would be better left behind. Personal self-introspective questionnaires that had to be completed and ticked off in my mind. Listening to the Shofar every day and truly internalising its message.

Finally, the actual trip. I will stop short of referring to the many hours spent in Shul over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as grueling. As a child I used to dread the High Holidays, simply because of the length of the shul services. (Because one does not

bite the hand that feeds him, I will not comment on how I feel these days...) But one could definitely get to the other side of the world in the time it takes to get from the first Maariv on Rosh Hashanah eve to the Shofar blast at the end of Yom Kippur.

At Oxford, at least, the seats are wide and comfortable and the aesthetics so pleasing that it is the equivalent of business class travel. The in-service entertainment provided by my officials and I are undoubtedly first class. No effort is spared to make the journey as comfortable as possible.

But we need to remember that the purpose of the service is not the service itself. It is indeed about getting to the other side. The closeness reached with Hashem while we spend hours addressing Him, up close and personal, as Thou in the second person. No need to wait until the synagogue doors swing open at the end of Neilah for this—every minute in Shul achieves this. But when we finally walk out at the end of the trip, we step into a 5777 blessed with good health and wealth, happiness and naches.

Travel safely and reach your destinations successfully.

Shana Tova

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

## FROM THE REBBETZIN

I have a tiny space between two back teeth. When something gets stuck it feels like there is a whole apple or a whole steak lodged in there. My mouth feels like there are two pliers pulling it apart in opposite directions and my brain feels like it is going to explode from the pressure. Then, a toothpick or piece of dental floss later, I am always astounded to see that the offending item is something not even a few millimeters in size. Another proof that the tiniest things make a difference.

It is this time of year that we are busy doing our own spiritual stocktaking. We need to look not only at the general picture of our lives but at all the tiny details. Every little thing makes a difference.

I want to take this opportunity to wish you and yours a shana tova. May all your prayers be answered so that you are blessed with a year of all and only goodness and sweetness.

Have a good month

*Rivky*

## SERVICE TIMES

### SHACHARIT (A.M.)

<b>Sunday and Public Holidays</b>	8:00
<b>Monday to Friday</b>	7:15
26/09, 29/09 (Selichot): 7:00	
27/09, 28/09, 30/09 (Selichot): 7:00	
<b>Shabbat &amp; Festivals</b>	9:00

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

<b>Sunday to Friday</b>	5:45
<b>from 09/10</b>	5:45
<b>Shabbat</b>	5:30
<b>from 08/10</b>	5:45

*Please see Tishrei calendar  
for detailed October service times*

## DVAR TORAH

### *The Long Blast*

*by Lazer Gurkow (chabad.org)*

### Three Sounds

The best-known sound in Jewish tradition is that of the shofar. One long blast is called tekiah. Three short blasts are called shevarim. Nine staccato blasts are called teruah. The blasts are sounded in that order, and the tekiah is then sounded again at the end of the sequence—the single long blast bracketing the other two. What is the significance of repeating this sound?

### Wordless Sound

Let's first talk about why we sound the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. If we have something to say on this holy day, why don't we just say it? To trumpet wordless sounds evokes images of cavemen from times when language was nascent and man's verbal capacity was too limited to convey complex ideas. We now know how to articulate our thoughts in language. So why don't we?

The fact is that we articulate plenty during these Days of Awe. We stand for hours on end, turning page after page of prayer and plea. But there is a level of emotion that cannot be articulated, a depth beyond words. That chamber can be accessed only through wordless sound.

Every language has an equivalent for the word "ouch." Yet, no matter which language we speak, when we experience very intense and pervasive pain, we just scream. We don't say "I am in pain." We don't even say "ouch." Instead, we emit a shout so guttural that it communicates pain beyond words.

The same is true of emotion. Some feelings can be

communicated through poetry. Deeper emotions, with a glance. Sometimes emotions are so intense that they evoke tears of joy. Some emotions are so powerful, so deep, that all you can do is sigh and say “Aaaah.”

Then there is the emotion that is beyond articulation. Even wordless sound can't capture it. That is what we feel on Rosh Hashanah. Our bond with G-d is so deep, vast and pervasive that no humanly emitted sound does it justice. Instead, we use an instrument. It blasts an opening in our hearts powerful enough to release torrents of deeply held and long-repressed emotions. It blasts an opening in our souls through which untapped yearning for G-d cascades.

### **Replenishing the River**

There is a metaphor given for this transformative experience: You one day realize that, as a result of ecological and climatic factors, your river has run dry. How do you refill it? You dig for a wellspring. And when you reach it, the water rushes to the surface and refills your river. The river will now run at full force again; perhaps it will be even fuller than before.

Our relationship with G-d sometimes runs dry. Throughout the year, we don't notice that the water levels are dipping. There is still plenty of water left in the riverbed, so we don't take note. But when the river runs dry, we can't keep lying to ourselves. We have to sit up and take notice.

On Rosh Hashanah, we take a peek at our river and discover that it is dry. We need to replenish the connection, but from what source can we fill ourselves up? We need to find a new source, because the old well has run dry. This is why we dig deep into our souls, to a

place that is as yet untapped, a place that is beyond articulation, to tap a new, fresh, hitherto unexperienced connection with G-d.

### **In the Holy of Holies**

This is why the moment of the shofar sounding is so spiritual and uplifting. We can feel the shofar strum the strings of our soul. We can feel the vibrations deep within, and the stirring release of powerful connections. This is why many Jews who don't frequent the synagogue throughout the year make a point of attending on Rosh Hashanah. How can we miss it? It is the most meaningful and powerful experience in the repertoire of our tradition.

We stand silently and listen, evoking the memory of the high priest in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year. He too stood silently, breathing not a word. When he stepped out of the Holy of Holies, he chanted a short prayer, but in the room he was silent.

The connection he felt with G-d in that holy space was indescribable. Beyond words and beyond sound. When he stood there, he was not a private individual. He represented the entire nation. Every soul was within him. And the reverence experienced by him then reverberated to every soul in the nation, especially to those who were present in the Temple at that time.

We don't have the Temple today, and aren't able to experience the connection with G-d that was present then. And though we await its rebuilding every day with the coming of Moshiach, it is not here yet. In the meantime we must make do with an alternative. The closest we can get to that experience is the wordless inarticulate blast of the shofar.

### **The Repeating Blast**

We now return to the repetition of the tekiah, the single long blast. Of the three sounds, the long blast is the least articulate. Though the other sounds are also wordless, they have character. The shevarim is a groan. The teruah is a sob. They communicate a message that tells us what to feel. The tekiah is just a cry. A deep piercing wail that says nothing. It comes from the depths, and has no message beyond a simple “I am here.”

The groaning and sobbing indicate remorse for having allowed our river to run dry. The tekiah is the blast that strikes a wellspring to refill it. The first tekiah is the agonizing cry from our depths. The second tekiah is G-d's response from above. Just like our yearning emerges from our depths, G-d's response emerges from His depths.

From the straits I call to G-d; from a vast expanse G-d responds. Our first blast calls out to G-d from the straits, the deep confined place that has not yet been tapped. The Divine response comes from the celestial wellspring that abounds with love and forgiveness. It is the wellspring that we sought to tap with our blast. The first blast gives voice to our desperation. The second blast gives voice to His answer.

To bring it all together, the sounds of the shofar communicate the following message: Tekiah, we are desperate for G-d, and yearn for G-d from our depths. Shevarim and teruah, we are broken-hearted over having allowed our relationship to run dry. Tekiah, G-d responds with love and says, “Return, My children, return. No matter where you roam, you can always come back home.”

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Marke & Jeanette Markovitz and Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great-grandson in Jerusalem to Disi & Gavi Markovitz.
- Philip & Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great-grandson born in Los Angeles to Ilan & Meira Flax.

**ENGAGEMENTS**

- Philip & Rilla Jacobson and Marke & Jeanette Markovitz on the engagement of Levi Markovitz to Tamar Swartz.

**MARRIAGES**

- Rabbi & Rivky Chaikin on the forthcoming marriage of their son Chaim to Chaya Shusterman on 21 September.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Riva Stein on her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday on 7 September.
- Colin Bliss on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on 13 September.
- Annette Wolk on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on 24 September.
- Hazel Benard on her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on 27 September.
- Danny Sack on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on 10 October.
- Fern Zev on her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on 13 October.
- Phillip Shifren on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday on 14 October.
- Stan Stein on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on 24 October.
- Hilly Kahn on his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on 26 October.

**REFUAH SHLEIMA**

We wish a Speedy Recovery to

- Henry Ulfane
- Louis Gecelter
- Myrna Kaplan
- Ann Levin



- Reg Berkowitz
- Blima Nudelman

**BEREAVEMENTS**

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- We wish long life to Leonie Abroms and Ivan Copelowitz on the death of their mother, Sarah.
- We wish long life to Hilly, Ivan and Larry Kahn & Tanya Silver on the death of their mother, Esme Kahn.
- We wish long life to Brenda Brick on the death of her brother, Arnold Rosenberg.
- We wish long life to Wilfred Ringo on the death of his wife, Maureen

