

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

20 North Avenue, Riviera  
✉ P.O. Box 87406, Houghton, 2041  
☎ 011-646-6020 📠 011-486-2214  
🌐 [www.oxfordshul.com](http://www.oxfordshul.com) 📧 [info@oxfordshul.com](mailto:info@oxfordshul.com)  
📘 [facebook.com/oxfordshul](https://facebook.com/oxfordshul)

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

September 2015

Tishrei 5776

### SHABBAT TIMES

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

11 & 12 September – 27 Elul

🕒 Nitzavim

🕒 5:41 – 🕒 6:30

18 & 19 September – 6 Tishrei

🕒 Vayelech

🕒 5:44 – 🕒 6:33

25 & 26 September – 13 Tishrei

🕒 Ha'azinu

🕒 5:47 – 🕒 6:36

2 & 3 October – 20 Tishrei

*Chol Hamoed Sukkot*

🕒 5:50 – 🕒 6:39

9 & 10 October – 27 Tishrei

🕒 Bereishit

🕒 5:53 – 🕒 6:43

FOR SERVICES OVER THE HIGH HOLIDAYS  
PLEASE CONSULT TISHREI GUIDE

### RABBI'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends:

***On Rosh Hashana is inscribed and on Yom Kippur is sealed... who will live and who will die, who at their predestined time and who before their predestined time... But Repentance, Prayer and Charity can remove the evil decree.***

These very moving words form the core of the prayer *Unetaneh Tokef*, considered by many to be the highlight of the service on both days of Rosh Hashana and on Yom Kippur. The Ark is opened, all rise, the choir

intones the traditional melodies, and there are few dry eyes in Shul as we ponder the fate that will befall us and those close to us in the year to come.

Yet amidst all the noise and the fanfare, the message of this beautiful and very powerful prayer, which was composed by Rabbi Amnon of Mayence in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, is deceptively simple: *Hashem is in charge. It is He who rules and decides what will happen to us. We, however, can influence that decision.*

***Hashem is in charge.*** I remember listening, some time ago, to a debate on the radio regarding euthanasia. It was rather heated, as you can well imagine, and someone asked the doctor on the panel if taking someone's life to relieve them of suffering was not a form of playing G-d.

"No," she replied somewhat arrogantly, "Medicine has taken life and death away from G-d a long time ago."

Living in the New South Africa, we sometimes wonder who is in charge. When violence spirals out of control and it is rather evident that Government is not being very effectual; when inflation is skyrocketing and the Rand skydiving, and nobody

seems to know how to curb either; when much of our economy is held hostage to unions and strikes repeatedly create havoc with our lives, we ask, "Is anyone in charge?" The most frightening thing of all is of course the randomness with which we as individuals seem to be affected—there is so little we can do to protect ourselves from the dangers that lurk ahead. Who, then, rules our destiny?

Let us remember that ***it is He who rules and decides what will happen to us.*** Nothing at all is random. We are never mere victims (or beneficiaries) of circumstances—it is not a matter of being at the wrong place at the wrong time (or being at the right place at the right time).

And, most importantly, ***we can influence that decision.*** Ultimately we are in charge of our own destiny. Our sincere prayers, our generous gifts to charity and our deep and heartfelt repentance all contribute to sway the Scales of Justice in our favour so that each and every one of us is inscribed and sealed for a Good and Sweet New Year. Shana Tova

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

**FROM THE REBBETZIN**

It is that time of year again when we are wishing our friends, families and acquaintances a shana tova. The Yom Tov season has, indeed, sprung upon us.

Yom Tov brings about so many emotions with its arrival.

Excitement at being together with visiting family. Sadness at missing the family who isn't visiting. Anticipation for the coming year, especially that, this year, we are starting it P.G. in a new home. Nerves and stress that come with all things new and all change. Hope that all my prayers will be heard and answered in the way that I think is best.

I am sure that each of you could make a list of your own too.

But, one thing we all have in common is our wishes for everyone we know and care for to have a Ketiva v'chatima tova.

May Hashem answer all the desires of our hearts, letova.

May it truly be a Shana Tova U'metuka.

Good Yom Tov

*Rivky*

**SHACHARIT (A.M.)**

**Sunday and Public Holidays** 8:00

**Monday to Friday** 7:15

08/09 & 11/09 (Selichot): 6:45  
09/09, 10/09 & 12/09 (Selichot): 7:00

**Shabbat & Festivals** 9:00

**FOR SERVICES OVER THE HIGH HOLIDAYS  
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**MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)**

**Sunday to Friday** 5:30

**from 30/09** 5:45

**Shabbat** 5:15

**DVAR TORAH****A LETTER FROM G-D**

*by Rabbi David Begoun  
(www.aish.com)*

My precious child,

I want to wish you a shana tova, a sweet new year, and share with you a few things that I think you need you to know.

When I look at you I see something very different than what you see when you look in the mirror. You see yourself as you are now. But when I look at you I see who you can become. My primary goal is to help you grow from where you are now to where I know you can be.

Sometimes you are already challenging yourself and pushing yourself to become that person that I created you to become. So I just watch, with great nachas, and gently guide you in that direction. I orchestrate the events and experiences of your day-to-day life to ensure the maximum possibility of your achievement of that goal.

Other times, I have to present you with challenges and hurdles in order to convert your potential greatness into actualized excellence. I know that those moments are sometime painful, but if I don't challenge you then you will never actualize your potential. Please remember that I am closer to you during those moments than I am at any other time.

I want to tell you about one of my most important employees. He is the V.P. of Human Development. His name is Yetzer hara, the evil inclination, and he works for me 365 days a year, 24/7. The Yetzer hara gets a bad rap, but he is really your best friend. If it weren't for him, you would remain a nobody forever. I

have empowered him to provide you with constant assaults and to approach you with a never ending barrage of creative tactics, but they only come to challenge you to grow and improve yourself. The Yetzer hara and I have only one goal for each encounter you have with him: we both want you to overpower him and show him what you are made of. Of course, once you do that I send him back with a more difficult obstacle to overcome, because that's how you really become great.

Here's some good advice: Speak to me. Often. And don't think I only understand Hebrew. I understand every language there is. So speak to me in your own language. And you don't have to wait to be in a synagogue; speak to me any time of day, no matter what you're doing – when you're driving your car, when you're taking a walk. Speak to me before you go to sleep. And most of all, speak to me on Shabbos. I am always available and I really am a good listener. In fact, I understand you better than anyone else (even yourself) because you are mine and I made you. So don't be shy, don't feel awkward; just pour your heart out to me and I promise I will respond.

And take advantage of Shabbat; it's My special gift for you. Turn off your phone, computer, iPad and all those other gadgets and use the quiet time to celebrate your most important relationships: your relationship with Me, your relationship with yourself and your relationships with those special people that you are closest to. Even if you can't carve out the whole 25 hours for this purpose, at least use some of the day to connect to me.

I will let you in on a secret: I am talking to you all the time but I speak in a faint whisper. You have

so many competing sounds, a cacophony of noises going on around you that drown me out. Find some quiet time and Shabbos and listen. You will be amazed what you hear.

Don't try to go through the journey of life on your own. I want you to find a mentor who can guide you and teach you and show you how to find Me and connect to Me. When you find that person, cling to him or her and don't let go. Make them teach you and guide you and take their advice to heart.

In addition, find someone to take this journey with. It is a lot easier to make this trek if you have someone with whom to share the journey. You can both make sure you are staying on target and heading toward your goals.

If you can, make the effort to come to the place on earth where My presence can most be felt. Spend some time in My city Jerusalem and imbibe the wisdom that oozes from the ancient walls there.

Rosh Hashanah is coming up. It's the birthday of mankind when I revise the plan of human history and write the next act for the year to come. Think about what major role you want to take. I am willing to let you play any role that you are committed to play. So think big and create a passionate vision of who you want to be this coming year. And on Rosh Hashanah, instead of counting the number of pages left in the machzor, talk to Me and tell Me what role you want to play.

The Book of Life will be open on that day and I am putting the pen in your hands. Choose life.

Love,

Your Father in Heaven who believes in you and loves you unconditionally.

## A STORY

### *The Master Key*

One year, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov said to Rabbi Ze'ev Kitze, one of his senior disciples: "You will blow the shofar for us this Rosh Hashanah. I want you to study all the kavanot (Kabbalistic meditations) that pertain to the shofar, so that you should meditate upon them when you do the blowing."

Rabbi Ze'ev applied himself to the task with joy and trepidation: joy over the great privilege that had been accorded him, and trepidation over the immensity of the responsibility. He studied the Kabbalistic writings that discuss the multifaceted significance of the shofar and what its sounds achieve on the various levels of reality and in the various chambers of the soul. He also prepared a sheet of paper on which he noted the main points of each kavanah, so that he could refer to them when he blew the shofar.

Finally, the great moment arrived. It was the morning of Rosh Hashanah, and Rabbi Ze'ev stood on the reading platform in the center of the Baal Shem Tov's synagogue amidst the Torah scrolls, surrounded by a sea of tallit-draped bodies. At his table in the southeast corner of the room stood his master, the Baal Shem Tov, his face aflame. An awed silence filled the room in anticipation of the climax of the day—the piercing blasts and sobs of the shofar.

Rabbi Ze'ev reached into his pocket, and his heart froze: the paper had disappeared!

He distinctly remembered placing it there that morning, but now it was gone. Furiously, he searched his memory for what he had learned, but his distress over the lost notes seemed to have incapacitated his brain: his mind was a total blank. Tears of frustration filled his eyes. He had disappointed his master, who had entrusted him with this most sacred task. Now he must blow the shofar like a simple horn, without any kavanot. With a despairing heart, Rabbi Ze'ev blew the litany of sounds required by law and, avoiding his master's eye, resumed his place.

At the conclusion of the day's prayers, the Baal Shem Tov made his way to the corner where Rabbi Ze'ev sat sobbing under his tallit. "Gut Yom Tov, Reb Ze'ev!" he called. "That was a most extraordinary shofar-blowing we heard today!"

"But Rebbe . . . I . . ."

"In the king's palace," said the Baal Shem Tov, "there are many gates and doors, leading to many halls and chambers. The palace-keepers have great rings holding many keys, each of which opens a different door. But there is one key that fits all the locks, a master key that opens all the doors."

"The kavanot are keys, each unlocking another door in our souls, each accessing another chamber in the supernal worlds. But there is one key that unlocks all doors, that opens up for us the innermost chambers of the divine palace. That master key is a broken heart."

([www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org))

**MAZALTOV**

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Adrian and Lauren Gore on the birth of a son.
- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great grandson in New York.

**ANNIVERSARIES**

- John and Brenda Brick on their 58<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on 1 September.

**WEDDINGS**

- Mazal Tov to Barry and Fiona Speigel on their marriage on 6<sup>th</sup> September

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Barney Gordon on his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday on 7 September.
- Ruth Stein on her 98<sup>th</sup> birthday on 8 September.
- Jules Schneid on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on 14 September.
- Sheldon Sundy on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on 14 September.
- Heather Bank on her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on 23 September.

**REFUAH SHLEIMA**

We wish a  
Speedy  
Recovery to



- Allan Sher

**BEREAVEMENTS**

Our condolences  
to the following  
who have  
suffered  
bereavements recently:



- Sidney Abramowitch on the death of his wife, Maja.
- Greg Spark on the death of his father, Willie.
- Hadassah Kobrin on the death of her sister, Sylvia Elyan.
- Corrine Rubin on the death of her father, Gerd Elsbach.

**Shana Tova!**

**OSSAC APPEAL**

Our synagogue is unique in Johannesburg. For the past 30 years we have provided an outreach programme for our fellow South Africans who have been deprived in the past of educational opportunities. We initially taught basic reading and writing skills but this is no longer necessary now that we have had 21 years of compulsory education in our country.

Today we concentrate on teaching skills such as dressmaking and cooking - practical skills which enrich lives and give our OSSAC members additional sources of income. Each week approximately 50 learners make use of our services. They pay R60 per month to come to OSSAC. However this does not cover the expenses of our paid teachers. We have come to rely heavily on donations.

When you consider giving this Rosh Hashanah would you add OSSAC to your beneficiaries - no matter how small your donation, it will help us keep the doors of OSSAC open.

Our bank details are: Informal Education and Skills, ABSA Bank, Killarney. Branch 508005. Account 4054601511.

OSSAC WISHES YOU AND YOUR FAMILY A HAPPY, HEALTHY NEW YEAR AND WELL OVER THE FAST.