

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

September 2017

Elul 5777 & Tishrei 5778

SHABBAT TIMES

🕒 Parasha - 🕒 Candle Lighting

🕒 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)

For service times see page 2

**FOR SERVICES OVER THE HIGH HOLIDAYS
PLEASE CONSULT TISHREI GUIDE**

8 & 9 September – 18 Elul

🕒 Ki Tavo

🕒 5:40 – 🕒 6:30

15 & 16 September – 25 Elul

🕒 Nitzavim & Vayelech

🕒 5:43 – 🕒 6:32

22 & 23 September – 3 Tishrei

🕒 Haazinu

🕒 5:46 – 🕒 6:35

29 & 30 September – 10 Tishrei

Yom Kippur

🕒 5:48 – 🕒 6:38

6 & 7 October – 17 Tishrei

🕒 Chold Hamoed Sukkot

🕒 5:52 – 🕒 6:42

13 & 14 October – 24 Tishrei

🕒 Bereshit

🕒 5:55 – 🕒 6:45

RABBI'S MESSAGE

I am lying on my bed in the spare room of my son's home, on Balaclava Road in the St Kilda East section of Melbourne. It is beautifully peaceful and my heart is filled with joy as I have participated in the simcha of my grandson's bris a few hours earlier. The hour is well after midnight but my body has not yet adjusted to 8-hour time difference and sleep eludes me. The house is quiet, as is the entire suburb. The traffic has now totally died down. But every couple of minutes,

the silence is broken by a clearly identifiable sound: the noise made by wheels along the tracks, as Melbourne's iconic tramways travel in both directions along the thoroughfare.

I am transported to another time, many decades ago. A little boy, I am lying on my bed in my childhood apartment on 1a Avenue Reine Marie-Henriette, in the Forest section of Brussels. Children often cannot fall asleep at night, even when not jet lagged and the sound of the trams that breaks the quiet several times an hour is absolutely the same. A flood of pleasant memories from my growing up fill me, as I reflect on the many brochos that these five decades have, TG brought to my family and me.

Sounds have that power...

Each morning, since the beginning of Elul, there is a sound that arouses our consciousness. The Shofar, blasting out the Tekia, Shevarim and Teruah, unmistakably produces the same sound as the one we hear on Rosh Hashana in Shul. It is a reminder that another year has passed, an opportunity to reflect, look deep into ourselves and wake up. The solemnity of the Days of Awe is almost upon us and this is a time for reckoning

and judgment-first our own personal critical assessment of where we are up to and then the verdict which shall be passed in the Heavenly Courtroom, as our fate is inscribed and then sealed.

The Shofar takes us back even further into our collective memory. It was the sound that we all experienced, as we stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, 33 centuries ago. We want to arouse Hashem's recollection of that special moment, way back in the childhood of our people hood. "Zacharti Lach..." I remember the kindness of your youth, as you followed Me into the desert. Our relationship with our Creator was so pure, so perfect.

Let us reflect back on the three millennia of Jewish History that have passed and offer thanks for all that Hashem has done for us as a Nation. Let us recommit to the Covenant and the oaths we took back then as we hold Him responsible for the promise He made then, that we would always be His People and that He would forever take care of us.

Shana Tova.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

It's Yom Tov again!

I went last week to listen to a frum scientist talk about creation, bringing together the Torah description with the scientific theories. I was fascinated. However, I am clearly no scientist, as the professor reacted with horror to my question. I wanted to know if it is possible that time is really going at a faster speed now than it did a few thousand years ago. He insists that it does not. I feel like like there is no doubt that it does. It was just Yom Tov wasn't it?

One thing that we are in agreement about, is that time is precious. This is the time of year when we do an assesment of the months, the days and even the minutes of the past and hope we used them well.

May Hashem bless each of us, that the coming year should be one filled with days, hours and minutes that are good and sweet and filled with happiness and blessings. Leshana tova umetuka!

Have a good month

Rivky

SERVICE TIMES

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SHACHARIT (A.M.)

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

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Sunday to Friday	5:45
from 01/10	6:00
Shabbat	5:30
from 07/10	5:45

A STORY***The Master Key***

*by Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin
(Chabad.org)*

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."

DVAR TORAH

A Short Guide to a New Head *by David Sacks (aish.com)*

As the High Holidays approach, it's natural to start thinking about the biggies. Like, who am I? What am I doing with my life? And why is there even a world? God didn't have to make one!

Rosh Hashanah doesn't only mean "new year"; it also means "a new head". What would we give for a new head? A fresh approach to navigating this fantastically mysterious treasure chest we inhabit.

So in the holiday spirit, here is a short guide to a New Headedness.

Let's begin with a simple but profound truth: The mind believes but the soul knows.

Let's try to visualize the difference.

Imagine a submarine immersed in water, far from the clarity of dry land. How does the submarine see beyond itself? There is a periscope that reaches from the top of the submarine, out of the water, and from there the people on the submarine can see what is going on beyond.

So it is with us. Our body is the submarine. We are surrounded by a world where God is hidden. In Hebrew, the word for "world" (olam) has the same root as the word for "hidden" (ne'elam). This is because God is hidden in this world.

Our soul is like the periscope. It transcends the hiddenness of this world and sees God. As a result, our soul doesn't have to believe – it knows the existence of God with clarity and certainty.

The question is: how can the mind, which is steeped in the confusion of this world, achieve

the same level of clarity as the soul and also come to know?

Here is a three step plan based on Torah wisdom.

Step One – See

Look at how the Shema is written in the prayer book. Something deep is going on. The last Hebrew letter of the word Shema, (hear/understand) and the last Hebrew letter of the word Echad (Oneness) are written in a significantly larger font. Our Rabbis teach that taken together, these two letters spell the Hebrew word for "witness" (Ayd). If you reverse the two letters, it spells the Hebrew word for "know" (Da) – as in the verse, "Know before Whom you stand".

In other words, if we "witness" (Ayd) the amazing ways in which God interacts with the world around us – eclipses, babies, ice cream, waterfalls, mind-blowing coincidences, and the internet to name a few – then we will come to "know" with certainty to whom the entirety of creation belongs.

Step Two – Do

When we accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai we made an amazing declaration. We told God that "We will do and we will hear" – in Hebrew, Na'asay v'nishmah. When God heard this declaration, He marveled and asked, "Who taught them the secret of the angels?"

What was so remarkable? With these words "we will do and we will hear," the Jewish people committed to doing the mitzvahs before we even heard what they were. The Kotzker Rebbe writes that doing first, and hearing the explanation later, is akin to climbing a ladder. First we do the mitzvah. The holiness that ensues lifts us to a higher spiritual level, and from that increased place of clarity we are now able to hear the Torah in a deeper way. (Cool aside: The Hebrew words for Sinai and

Ladder share the same numerical value.)

This process repeats itself over and over. As we do more, we hear better, thereby achieving increasing degrees of spiritual clarity. In this way, we're able to transform the mind's belief in God into the soul's knowledge of God.

I don't think the first two steps can work without the third step. And it may be possible that the third step will work without the first two steps.

Step Three – Love

The Prophet Hoshaya writes, "I will betroth you with belief and you will know God." The whole secret of turning belief into knowledge is in the opening words – "I will betroth you!"

If our belief comes from a place of love – then we will know God.

Wow.

Love is the secret formula. Through love you become one. All else falls away. (Cool aside: Love and One share the same numerical equivalent in Hebrew).

Amazingly, in the Torah, the very first word after the Shema is V'ahavta, and you shall love! God is telling us, if you want to reveal His Oneness then love Him with all of your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your "me'odecha".

"Me'odecha" is translated as might or money, but literally it means with all of your "very" (me'od). How do we serve God "with all our very"? By taking the fire of our hearts, the things we feel most strongly about in life, and using them to serve God.

Rosh Hashanah is coming. Our new heads are arriving! If we want the latest model – one where our minds have the same clarity as our souls – then see, do, and most importantly love

MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

BIRTHS

- Michoel & Chaya Mushka Chaikin, Rabbi & Rivky on the birth of a son and grand-son in Melbourne.
- Cynthia Katz on the birth of a great grandson
- Joe and Myrna Davidovitz on the births of a grandson and a great-grandson

BAR-MITZVAH

- Wayne Koonin and Caron Koonin on the bar-mitzvah of their son, Daniel

MARRIAGE

- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the marriage of their grandson, Akiva Moshel, to Sara Silverstein in New York

BIRTHDAYS

- Russel Wolpe on his 80th birthday on 5th September.
- Barney Gordon on his 95th birthday on 7th September.
- Jennifer Levy on her 55th birthday on 10th September.
- Danielle Fobel on her 45th birthday on 21st September.
- Annette Wolk and her 91st birthday on 24th September.
- Joel Levy on his 55th birthday on 30th September.

ANNIVERSARIES

- John & Brenda Brick on their 60th anniversary on the 1st September.
- Ronald & Estelle Katz on their 50th anniversary on the 3rd September.

REFUAH SHLEIMA

We wish a Speedy recovery to:



- Russel Wolpe
- Michael Hirschowitz
- Harold Mograbi

BEREAVEMENTS

Our condolences to the following who have suffered bereavements recently:



- Raymond Isakow on the death of his father, Cyril.
- The Utian family on the death of their mother and grandmother, Norma

**OXFORD'S HALL OF REMEMBRANCE**

The plaques in the Hall of Remembrance record the names and the date of death of departed loved ones. The lights on the plaques are lit on the Yartzeit and also whenever Yizkor is recited. A special Hazkara memorial prayer is also recited during Yizkor.

Cost of a plaque is R540 for the first plaque ordered, R360 for subsequent plaques

Please note that due to rising costs of engraving, this price will only be honoured for orders made before Yom Kippur. The new price from October 2017 will be R720 for the first plaque and R540 for subsequent plaques.