

THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER September/October 2023

**Elul 5783
& Tishrei/Cheshvan 5784**

ה'תשפ"ג

RABBI'S MESSAGE

I always feel a tension this time of year. With days to go until the High Holidays, things tend to get really busy and hectic. And there is so much to do... This is where I experience this inner conflict.

As a rabbi, I am facing what is undoubtedly the most intense period in synagogue life. There are calls, WhatsApps, emails, lists, rosters. Services need to be co-ordinated with the Chazan, honours allocated, timetables drawn up. In addition to this all, alternative sources of power need to be procured in the eventuality (certainty?) of load shedding during Shul. And Sukkot follows soon thereafter, with its own numerous holiday requirements.

As a Jew, this is the most intense period of the annual cycle. Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Divine Judgement, when our spiritual and religious level is assessed. The days leading up to these Days of Awe are about self-reckoning, assessing where each of us is at, committing to improve our ways. It is a time to do more mitzvot, to give more charity, working on becoming a better person.

And the tension is in the difficulty of juggling these two

parts of myself, dividing myself between my professional and personal identities. Rabbis often joke that they should be given an alternative date for the High Holidays, as they are much too busy giving of themselves to their congregations on the original date...

A couple of days ago, I was listening to a podcast by Rabbi Efrem Goldberg of the Boca Raton Synagogue in the USA. It was advice to rabbis on how to handle this tug-of-war. I turned the volume up and focused my attention. He was relating the one year when he took a sabbatical and ended up spending Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur seated in the regular pews. He shared how lost and how useless he had felt. His life had become one of inspiring others, through sermons and more importantly through his personal example and advice.

I reflected myself on what it would be like to spend Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur without a sermon to deliver, services to conduct and congregants to lead. I think I would feel totally miserable.

Thinking about this, there is no place else that I want to daven on these holidays other than the magnificent, hallowed sanctuary of our beloved Oxford. There is

SHABBAT TIMES

🔊 Parasha - 🕯️ Candle Lighting
🕯️ Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)
For service times see page 2 & 4

8 & 9 September – 23 Elul

🔊 Nitzavim & Vayelech

🕯️ 5:40 – 🕯️ 6:30

15 & 16 September – 1 Tishrei
Rosh Hashonah Day 1

🕯️ 5:43 – 🕯️ 6:33

22 & 23 September – 8 Tishrei
🔊 Haazinu (*Shabbat Shuva*)

🕯️ 5:46 – 🕯️ 6:35

29 & 30 September – 15 Tishrei
Sukkot 1st Day

🕯️ 5:49 – 🕯️ 6:38

6 & 7 October – 22 Tishrei
Shemini Atzeret

🕯️ 5:52 – 🕯️ 6:42

13 & 14 October – 29 Tishrei
🔊 Bereishit

🕯️ 5:55 – 🕯️ 6:46

20 & 21 October – 6 Cheshvan
🔊 Noach

🕯️ 5:59 – 🕯️ 6:50

27 & 28 October – 13 Cheshvan
🔊 Lech Lecha

🕯️ 6:03 – 🕯️ 6:54

3 & 4 November – 20 Cheshvan
🔊 Vayera

🕯️ 6:07 – 🕯️ 6:59

nobody else I want to pray with other than my beloved congregation, who over my two decades here have become friends and part of a large family. And nothing could enhance my own spiritual journey more than the privilege of leading others along with me.

The key to get rid of this tension is the realisation that

there are not two conflicting personae at play here. It is to integrate these two roles and make them one. This will not remove the stress—there is still so much to do—but will turn distress into a positive energy.

I look forward to seeing you all at Oxford, soon. More importantly, I look forward to my spiritual voyage merging into one combined expedition with yours.

Shana Tova.

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin

FROM THE REBBETZIN

Generally, this is the time of year for introspection and for looking at the past year. For many it has been a harsh, difficult year, be it due to health, parnossah, and even loss. Some people have had a blessed year with plenty of nachas, simchas and blessings. For most of us there have been both good things and challenges.

It is easy to be weighed down by the hardships and the difficulties, especially loss, which just hurts! When possible, if we could only concentrate on the blessings it would help us immensely.

My wish for all my family and friends is that the year ahead should bring only blessings, good happy things and also comfort and strength to those who are suffering.

P.G a Shanah tovah u'metuka. May it be truly good and very sweet!

Ketiva Vachatima Tova.

Rivky

DVAR TORAH

THE ROYAL RETURN: A PARABLE

Once, a king had an only son - fine and learned, the apple of his eye. The king decided that the prince should travel to far-off lands to acquire wisdom and knowledge of human behaviour. He provided his son with a large escort of nobles and eminent men, with servants for their every need. He gave his son great wealth to journey in ease and luxury to many lands and remote islands - in the hope that the prince would grow wise and experienced.

Accustomed to luxury, the journeying prince misspent the money in insatiable pursuit of sensual pleasure and self-gratification.

Soon, he squandered all he possessed. In time, he was alone in a remote land where his father was unknown. Dismayed, he returned home; but after so much time, he had forgotten his native tongue. He tried to communicate that he was the king's son, but the people did not understand.

He reached the castle, and signalled his identity - but to no avail. Desperate, he cried out in a loud voice, hoping his father would hear. The king recognized his son's anguished cry - and in

fatherly compassion, he ran to embrace his son.

The Chassidic masters explain: This expresses our unique relationship with G-d, for the Jewish people are described as G-d's children. Just as the prince was sent on a journey, we are dispatched from above to acquire wisdom through our earthly sojourn - to rise through the Torah and mitzvot we do in this world. But the body's desires for sensual pleasure take the soul far from its heavenly Father, having lost its true language, Torah. Only when it returns to the King - through a simple, heartrending cry - is the soul reunited with G-d.

This is the Shofar blast on Rosh Hashanah, the passionate cry from the depths of the Jewish heart; our most profound expression of repentance - remorse for the past and sincere commitment for the future to fulfill our Father's will. And we receive a parent's loving response - as the king embraced the prince, so G-d draws us close and renews our essential bond.

SERVICE TIMES

For services 15/09-08/10 see page 4.

SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Sunday & Public Holidays	8:00
Monday to Friday	7:15
11/09 & 14/09: 7:00 (Selichot)	
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30

MINCHA AND MAARIV (P.M.)

Friday	6:00
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MAZALTOV

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

ENGAGEMENTS

- Neil and Caroline Myerson on the engagement of their daughter, Rebecca, to Aharon Grossberg.

MARRIAGES

- Russel Wolpe on the marriage of his granddaughter, Shani Sperber to Itay Kleiman in Israel on 20th August.

BAR-MITZVAHS

- Maurice and Rose Oskowitz on the Bar-Mitzvah of their grandson in Australia

BIRTH

- Philip and Rilla Jacobson on the birth of a great granddaughter in Johannesburg

BIRTHDAYS

- Jules Schneid on his 88th birthday on the 14th September.
- Rhona Gilbert on her 75th birthday on the 30th September.
- Phillip Altbeker on his 88th birthday on the 6th October.
- Gary Epstein on his 65th birthday on the 26th October.

ANNIVERSARIES

- John & Brenda Brick on their 66th anniversary on the 1st September.
- Ronald & Estelle Katz on their 56th birthday on the 3rd September.

BEREAVEMENTS

We wish long life to

- Fanny, Eric and Alan Liebermann on the death of their father, Robert.
- Zelyne Aharon, Illana Ackerman and Mark Sarachik on the death of their father, Colman Sarachik

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

