

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

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# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## September/October 2024

### Elul & Tishrei 5784/5

## SHABBAT TIMES

⇄ Parasha - 🕯 Candle Lighting

🕯 Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)  
For service times see page 2 and 4

13 & 14 September – 11 Elul

⇄ Ki Teitzei

🕯 5:42 – 🕯 6:32

20 & 21 September – 18 Elul

⇄ Ki Tavo

🕯 5:45 – 🕯 6:35

27 & 28 September – 25 Elul

⇄ Nitzavim & Vayealech

🕯 5:48 – 🕯 6:38

4 & 5 October – 3 Tishrei

⇄ Haazinu (*Shabbat Shuva*)

🕯 5:51 – 🕯 6:41

11 & 12 October – 10 Tishrei

*Yom Kippur*

🕯 5:54 – 🕯 6:45

18 & 19 October – 17 Tishrei

*Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot*

🕯 5:58 – 🕯 6:49

25 & 26 October – 24 Tishrei

⇄ Bereshit

🕯 6:02 – 🕯 6:53

## RABBI'S MESSAGE

The winds of Elul are blowing. For generations, this is the term that has been used to describe the spirit that envelops us during this final month of the year, leading up to Rosh Hashana.

Wind is unsettling. It makes us uneasy and irritable, reaching us to the core. When I was teaching Primary School, back in Cape Town, I learnt that students were absolutely out of control when the

Southeaster was blowing across the school fields.

The Elul wind does the same to me, reaching into my core and unsettling me. I ask myself why there is this tension.

Is it because this is the busiest month of the year, as a congregational rabbi, as I stress about all I have to do to be ready for Yomtov? Is it because I am about to face Divine judgment on Rosh Hashana? Or my congregation's judgment about my own performance at Shul? There is some of that, but to be honest, I have been doing this for close to four decades, I should be able to be more in control. Then what?

There is dissonance between the person I am this month and the way I behave all year. I am definitely more scrupulous with my Yiddishkeit and my general metchlichkeit during this auspicious month. I like to believe that the Elul-me is the real me, but there is definitely a tension between the two personae.

There is also dissonance between the expectations I had of myself for the current year and the way the year actually turned out. Last year's High Holidays were

filled with great resolutions for the year ahead. This was going to be the year, I said to myself, but perhaps it turned out to be just another year in Africa.

Then there is also dissonance between the expectations we had a year ago, and the reality of the year that is now ending. We started with the certainty that our prayers had been accepted and that we would have a year filled with blessings and peace for our People. For Am Yisrael this has truly been an annus horribilis.

And there is dissonance at the thought of celebrating the festive season ahead, rejoicing and celebrating on our holidays, when our hearts are filled with a heavy sadness.

As 5784 comes to an end, the traditional wish resonates powerfully, "may the year and its curses come to an end and may the new year and its blessings begin." May 5785 bring us revealed and open goodness, for us personally, for the entire Jewish community, for Jews in the Holy Land and around the world.

Shana Tova.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

**FROM THE REBBETZIN**

Every morning I listen to Radio Chai-fm as I drive to school. Every morning the presenter begins his Israel report with the number of days of the war. So we are literally counting the days of this year.

This has been a really difficult year on so many levels. 340 days since the horror began worldwide. 150 days since my personal sadness, the loss of my dad.

I remember listening to the Shofar blow at the end of Yom Kippur. The long blast made me feel so confident and so sure that this would be a good year. And then, just a week later, everything exploded.

There have also been blessings this year, for which I do have so much gratitude. But it is with a different emotion that I face this coming Yom Tov.

I am working hard to continue to hope, to pray, to believe, and to be positive. I am mostly working hard to appreciate and thank Hashem for the plenty good that is around and to beg for more.

May we all be blessed with a year ahead of peace, good health, simchos and happiness for all.

Leshana Tova Umetuka

Ketiva Vachatima Tova

Rivky

**SERVICE TIMES**

*For service times over High Holidays see back page*

**SHACHARIT (A.M.)**

Monday and Thursday 7:15  
Shabbat & Festivals 9:00

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

Friday 5:45

**DVAR TORAH**

**Overcoming Apathy and Discouragement**

*By Rabbi Nechemia Coopersmith (aish.com)*

**Preparing for Rosh Hashanah should not be a downer. It's an auspicious, exciting time for clarity and closeness, grounded in positivity and love.**

The Hebrew month of Elul, a spiritually super-charged time leading up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, has a surprising theme. The word "Elul" is an acronym for the phrase "Ani l'dodi v'dodi li – I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me" that comes from King Solomon's Song of Songs (6:3).

To borrow from Tina Turner's famous song, what's love got to do with it? Why does this phrase that articulates the deep longing between two lovers, which is a metaphor for the love between G-d and the Jewish People, serve as the core focus of preparing for Rosh Hashanah?

**What's the Essence of Rosh Hashanah?**

Rosh Hashanah transports you back to the very beginning of time when G-d, as CEO of the universe, was setting budgets and job descriptions for all of humanity. As a multi-gazillionaire, there is no limit to what this CEO can allocate. The only limit is His employees' understanding of the company's vision and the extent of their responsibility to implement the CEO's bottom line.

On Rosh Hashanah, you stand before G-d, a.k.a. the CEO of the universe, making your case for the upcoming year. The previous year is over; your past performance is not relevant. Every person is starting a new chapter and everything is up for grabs. Now is the time to get clarity,

articulate your dreams, and genuinely commit to make them happen.

The month of Elul is the crucial time period to recalibrate your goals and get ready to make your presentation to the Boss Himself.

**Two Obstacles**

But embracing this challenge requires overcoming two sizable obstacles that you may find yourself slamming into: apathy and discouragement.

You feel pretty distant from G-d and are perfectly content to stay where you are, putting in your minimal effort to live a decent life and spending the rest of your time on social media and binge-watching, and whatever fix you need to comfortably pass away the time. Apathy stops all growth in its tracks.

And if you *do* want to work on personal growth and take preparing for Rosh Hashanah seriously, there's that voice that whispers in your ear: "Who are you kidding? How many times have you gone down this road, and look where you are? In the exact same spot, with the exact same issues. People don't change. Admit it, you're a failure and there is no reason to think this year will be any different."

Discouragement saps your energy and cynically undermines your ability to change.

The phrase "I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me" that typifies the essence of Elul is the life preserver you need to extract you from your debilitating apathy and discouragement.

How so?

**Love is the Pillar**

Stephen Covey, the author of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, popularized the expression, "Love is a verb." One of Judaism's commandments is "to love your

neighbor" which most commentaries define as expressing love through action. It's tricky to mandate an emotion; commanding action is far more doable.

Marriage is the commitment to shower your spouse with acts of love, no matter what mood you're in and whether or not you're feeling the love. Regardless of your feeling, love her – meaning put your love into action. Show affection, give compliments, go out on a date, be curious and listen, and most importantly care about the things your spouse cares about.

Putting your love into action fosters feelings of love. What starts as a verb becomes an object. And the distance you may have been feeling between you and your spouse dissipates as the intimacy is restored.

Now apply this with G-d. It's okay if you're not feeling the love. Love is a verb; just do it. Don't wait for the sudden inspiration. Take a few quiet moments and ask yourself: what are the things that are important to G-d that I can work on making important to me? Give yourself some time to answer; you may be surprised to hear what your inner self says when you access it with honesty and vulnerability.

Then select one or two things that speak most to you and start implementing them, slowly but surely. These first steps loosen the shackles of apathy and help close the spiritual distance you may be feeling with G-d. But you need to make the first move, not G-d. That's why the phrase begins, "I am for my beloved" – it starts with you taking the first step.

**The Ultimate Cheerleader**

Love flows both ways. Once you take that first step in drawing closer to G-d, your efforts will be met with G-d's welcoming embrace. G-d's love is a constant. Even the smallest

step forward impacts the tenor of the relationship.

G-d reciprocates, as expressed in the second part of the phrase, "and my Beloved is for me." This is essential to overcoming discouragement.

While you may have moments where you feel like throwing in the towel and give up on yourself, G-d sees what you're really made of. As your Creator Who invested in you immeasurable potential for greatness that only you can achieve through your unique mission in life, G-d is rooting for you and wants you to succeed. Feel that love and allow it to empower you to take the next step forward in your journey.

Preparing for Rosh Hashanah should not be a heavy downer. It's an auspicious, exciting time for clarity and closeness, grounded in positivity and love.

That's why the essence of Elul is expressed through the phrase "I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me", underscoring the love that exemplifies this period.

Turns out that love has everything to do with it. Initiating small steps to strengthen your relationship with G-d will shake off your apathy and arouse a greater feeling of love and closeness. And this, in turn, will be reciprocated by G-d's constant love, giving you the encouragement and confidence to plow forward, step by step, in fulfilling your life's journey.

In the first story, we see a delegation of leading sages heading towards Rome. But why were they travelling there, 1,500 miles from home?

The Roman Empire had long had its boot on the neck of Judea, and had destroyed the Jewish commonwealth along with the Holy Temple. This was a time of great oppression against the Jews, and these outstanding rabbis had come to confront their oppressors and

appeal the harsh decrees imposed on the Jewish People in the Holy Land. Weeping under those circumstances made sense – laughing did not.

Likewise, in the second story, the sages were facing the site of the destruction of the holiest place in Judaism. It had been so decimated that the area had been reclaimed by nature, such that foxes were strolling around. For dozens of generations, this had been a national symbol, the site of Jewish worship, and now it lay in ruins. Surely, it would be surprising for a saintly rabbi to find the scene a cause for laughter!

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**MAZAL TOV**

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We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Julius Schneid on his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September
- Philip Altbeker on his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October
- Gary Epstein on his 66<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October

**BIRTHS**

- June Berger on the birth of a great granddaughter

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**REFUAH SHLEIMA**

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We wish a speedy recovery to:

- Philip Jacobson
- Gil Lang

# TISHREI 5785 CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SHABBAT
<p><i>All of us at Oxford wish you Shana Tova and well over the Fast</i></p> <p>לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו</p>			2 October  <b>EREV ROSH HASHANA</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 6:30 a.m. ✨ Annulment of vows ✨ Eruv Tavshilin 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 5:45 a.m. 🍏 Apple & Honey in evening  🕒 5:50 p.m.	3 October 1 Tishrei  <b>ROSH HASHANA</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m. 📖 Torah Reading: 10:15 a.m. 🎺 Shofar: 11:00 a.m. 🕯 Musaf: 11:30 a.m. 🕯 Mincha: 5:30 p.m. 🕯 Tashlich: 5:50 p.m. 🕯 Maariv: 6:00 p.m. ✨ Eat new Fruit in evening  🕒 6:40 p.m.	4 October 2 Tishrei  <b>ROSH HASHANA</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m. 📖 Torah Reading: 10:15 a.m. 🎺 Shofar: 11:00 a.m. 🕯 Musaf: 11:35 a.m. 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 5:45 p.m.  🕒 5:51 p.m.	5 October 3 Tishrei  <b>SHABBAT SHUVA</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m. 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 5:45 p.m.  🕒 6:41 p.m.
		6 October 4 Tishrei  <b>FAST OF GEDALYA</b> ✨ Fast begins: 4:32 a.m. 🕯 Shacharit: 8:00 a.m. 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 5:45 p.m. ✨ Fast ends: 6:28 p.m.	7 October 5 Tishrei  🕯 Shacharit: 7:15 a.m. 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 6:00 p.m.	8 October 6 Tishrei  🕯 Candle lighting 🕯 Shabbat / Yom Tov ends 🕯 Service ✨ Other	9 October 7 Tishrei  🕒 5:54 p.m.	10 October 8 Tishrei  🕯 Shacharit: 7:15 a.m.
13 October 11 Tishrei  🕒 5:57 p.m.	14 October 12 Tishrei  🕯 Shacharit: 7:15 a.m.	15 October 13 Tishrei  <b>EREV SUKKOT</b> ✨ Eruv Tavshilin 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 6:00 p.m. 🍷 Brocha in Sukkah after Shul ✨ Eat Dinner in Sukkah  🕒 5:57 p.m.	16 October 14 Tishrei  <b>SUKKOT</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m. ✨ Shake Lulav & Etrog ✨ Eat all meals in Sukkah 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 6:00 p.m. 🍷 Brocha in Sukkah after Shul  🕒 6:48 p.m.	17 October 15 Tishrei  <b>SUKKOT</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m. ✨ Shake Lulav & Etrog ✨ Eat all meals in Sukkah 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 5:45 p.m.	18 October 16 Tishrei  <b>SUKKOT</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m. ✨ Shake Lulav & Etrog ✨ Eat all meals in Sukkah 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 5:45 p.m.	19 October 17 Tishrei  <b>SHABBAT CHOL HAMOED</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m. ✨ Eat all meals in Sukkah  🕒 6:49 p.m.
20 October 18 Tishrei  <b>CHOL HAMOED</b> ✨ Shake Lulav & Etrog ✨ Eat all meals in Sukkah	21 October 19 Tishrei  <b>CHOL HAMOED</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 7:00 a.m. ✨ Shake Lulav & Etrog ✨ Eat all meals in Sukkah	22 October 20 Tishrei  <b>CHOL HAMOED</b> ✨ Shake Lulav & Etrog ✨ Eat all meals in Sukkah	23 October 21 Tishrei  <b>HOSHANA RABBA</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 6:30 a.m. ✨ Shake Lulav & Etrog ✨ Eat all meals in Sukkah ✨ Eruv Tavshilin 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 6:00 p.m.  🕒 6:01 p.m.	24 October 22 Tishrei  <b>SHEMINI ATZERET</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m. 🕯 Yizkor 11:00 a.m. 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 6:00 p.m. 📖 Hakafot after Maariv  🕒 6:52 p.m.	25 October 23 Tishrei  <b>SIMCHAT TORAH</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m. 🍷 Kiddush: 10:00 a.m. 📖 Hakafot: 10:30 a.m. ✨ Simchat Torah Lunch: 1:00 p.m. 🕯 Mincha/Maariv: 5:45 p.m.	26 October 24 Tishrei  <b>SHABBAT ISRU CHAG</b> 🕯 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m.

