

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

20 North Avenue, Riviera  
✉ P.O. Box 87406, Houghton, 2041  
☎ 011-646-6020 📠 086-580-2624  
🌐 [www.oxfordshul.com](http://www.oxfordshul.com) 📧 [info@oxfordshul.com](mailto:info@oxfordshul.com)  
[facebook.com/oxfordshul](https://www.facebook.com/oxfordshul)

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

June 2022  
Sivan 5782

## SHABBAT TIMES

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

3 & 4 June – 5 Sivan

⇄ Bamidbar  
🕯 5:05 – 🕯 5:57

10 & 11 June – 12 Sivan

⇄ Nasso  
🕯 5:05 – 🕯 5:57

17 & 18 June – 19 Sivan

⇄ Beh'alotcha  
🕯 5:06 – 🕯 5:58

24 & 25 June – 26 Sivan

⇄ Shelach  
🕯 5:07 – 🕯 5:59

1 & 2 July – 3 Tammuz

⇄ Korach  
🕯 5:09 – 🕯 6:02

## RABBI'S MESSAGE

To get to the top of Mount Sinai entails an arduous jeep ride to the foot of the mountain. This is then followed by a two-hour trek up a pathway comprising 3750 stone steps. There is also a camel path, but travelling on the back of this animal will take even longer. I have heard that the views along the climb and from the top are spectacular.

Sadly, there is no conclusive evidence that this mountain in the South of the Sinai Peninsula is indeed the site of the Great Revelation. The monastery at the base was only established in the 6th Century, more than 2800 years after the historical event took place.

At least three other venues are proposed by scholars as the possible site of Mount Sinai. Two of those are elsewhere in the Sinai Peninsula. But there is also a suggestion that the revelation to Moses at the Burning Bush, which Hashem told him would be the site of the future revelation, was in the Midianite Desert, several hundred miles East in what is today Saudi Arabia.

Even if this was the site of the Giving of the Torah, a pilgrimage there would be a historical, archeological and emotional journey but not be a spiritual experience. Indeed, the Mountain was consecrated during the days leading up to the Revelation. Moshe was repeatedly instructed to warn the Israelites that they were not to ascend nor allow their cattle to graze there.

However, once the Ten Commandments were delivered, the mountain lost all sanctity. "When the horn is sounded, they will be allowed to go up the Mountain (Exodus 19)," says Hashem. Ironically, the place where the greatest display of G-dliness ever took place no longer has any inherent holiness. Hence there is no religious injunction to go to pray there. This explains why we are unsure of the exact (or even approximate location) of this mountain.

Interestingly, the exact date of the Gift of the Torah is

equally nebulous. Over several pages in the Talmud, the rabbis debate whether we heard the Ten Commandments on the Sixth or the Seventh of Sivan. The Torah says they arrived at Mount Sinai on the first day of Sivan, but then it is unclear how many days elapsed until they were ready to hear the Divine Voice. The timing of this tremendous event is thus similarly shrouded in uncertainty.

The lesson is clear. The Gift of Torah received on Shavuot transcends both the dimensions of space and of time.

We often hear Diaspora Jews argue that to fulfil the precepts of the Torah and to follow the laws of Judaism is not possible while living in a mixed society. Jews in Israel, are free to dress as Jews, practice as Jews and behave as Jews. Conversely, Israeli Jews often claim that the rituals are only necessary for those of us who live outside of the Holy Land; their Jewish identity can best be expressed through language and culture.

I also often hear the argument that Torah was applicable in a different era but that in this modern age there are other and better ways to connect with Hashem.

So we know neither when exactly Torah was given, nor where. For the laws given at Sinai are forever and for everywhere.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

**FROM THE REBBETZIN**

Yesterday I answered “will attend” to a wedding invitation for the first time in over two years. First it was strict lockdown and there were no weddings. Then it was medium lockdown and we chose not to go to large gatherings. Then my mom died and for another year, I was not permitted to go to weddings. This week, when I received the invitation, it did not even occur to me to say yes. So often we wish our friends “may we share in each other’s simchos” but we have started to forget what that really means.

There is actually a mitzvah instructing us to be משמח חתן וכלה, to make a bride and groom happy. The Torah even tells us how. Many great Torah scholars were even known to come to weddings, all dressed up and doing acrobatics, just to bring a smile of joy. And now, we are invited to a wedding and we wonder if we should attend or not. It is so easy to forget. To forget how we prayed for simchos; to forget how we wished each other simchos; to forget how good it feels when we are part of each other’s simchos. And so I answered, “will attend.” May we all, always, have only simchos to share.

Have a good month.

*Rivky*

**DVAR TORAH*****Small Acts, Cosmic Implications***

*By Rabbi Efrem Goldberg  
(aish.com)*

In 2007, an employee of a New Jersey Dunkin Donuts named Dustin Hoffmann (not that one) made news when the store was nearly robbed by a serial robber who jumped on the counter grabbing the cash out of the cashiers’ register. The 20-something Hoffmann fought back. Grabbing the man’s arm with one hand and a large coffee mug with another, he quickly and repeatedly smashed the crook’s head with the mug and successfully thwarted the crime.

When later asked about the incident, Hoffmann said that what galvanized him into action was YouTube: “What was going through my mind at that point,” he said, “was that the security tape is either going to show me run away and hide in the office, or whack this guy in the head, so I just grabbed the cup and clocked the guy pretty hard! There are only a few videos like that on YouTube now, so mine’s going to be the best. That’ll teach this guy!”

We traditionally assume that we read The Book of Ruth on Shavuot because the story of Ruth describes the paradigmatic convert. Ruth made the choice to join the Jewish people and to forge her destiny with ours. She is the model of “opting in” and on the holiday in

which we commemorate the mass conversion of our nation at Mount Sinai, her story inspires us to embrace our Torah, our tradition and our heritage with great enthusiasm, zeal, and fervor.

Without rejecting that reason, I would like to suggest another one. The Midrash (Ruth Rabbah 5) says:

*When a person does a mitzvah, he should do it with a happy heart, because if Reuven would have known that God would write about him, “And Reuven heard and saved him (Yosef) from their hands,” he would have brought Yosef back to his father carrying him on his shoulders. If Aaron would have known that God would write about him, “Behold he will come out towards you and be happy in his heart,” he would have come out with drums and musical instruments (to greet Moses). If Boaz would have known that God would write about him, “And he picked for her roasted corn,” he would have served her fatted calves.)*

Had he only known that the mic is on and the camera is rolling. Had he only realized that this clip of his life would be shown on YouTube they would have done so much more.

Does the Midrash mean to suggest that these great individuals would have acted differently if they knew the cameras were on them? Are we meant to understand that these most humble,

righteous individuals were driven by their egos such that their conduct would have been altered by the knowledge that their actions would be publicized? How could this be?

Explains Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky, the Midrash doesn't mean to imply that that PR would have changed their behavior. It wasn't ego that was the problem. It was the opposite, their extreme humility. These great men thought of themselves as small, insignificant personalities on the great world stage. They saw their behaviors as small acts of kindness, no big deal. They failed to recognize the cosmic impact and large influence our small deeds can have.

If Reuven had indeed brought Yosef back to his father, the entire servitude and exile could have been avoided altogether. When Aaron and Moses met, the greatest redemption in history was beginning to unfold and Moses was on perhaps the most important and significant mission any individual has ever undertaken in Jewish history.

Boaz thought he was giving a little tzedaka, sharing a small amount of food. Little did he know that his interaction with Ruth was the beginning of a relationship that would yield the Davidic dynasty and ultimately that will bring the Messiah.

Indeed, Ruth and Boaz were truly a match made in

Heaven. Ruth in her soft-spoken manner did what she thought was a small act of kindness. She refused to leave her mother-in-law alone and pledged to accompany her. Boaz, rather than looking the other way, embraced the chance at sharing the produce of his field. Together, these two individuals who saw themselves and their actions as pedestrian and inconsequential altered all of human destiny by planting the seeds for redemption. Indeed, the Midrash notes how God Himself took notice of their humility and declared, "Boaz did his, and Ruth did hers, so too will I do Mine!"

Our actions have cosmic implications. The small acts of kindness we engage in can make the biggest difference not only to ourselves, but to all of humanity. As the chaos theory's "butterfly effect" attests, small acts can have large outcomes. Chaos theory is applied in mathematics, microbiology, computer science, economics, engineering, finance, just to name a few.

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has applied chaos theory in one more realm. In his book "To Heal a Fractured World," he coined the phrase "chaos theory of virtue," demonstrating how small acts of kindness can have immeasurable consequences on the world.

Boaz and Ruth each did one act that changed the world, and so can we. Who

knows what opportunity we will be presented with or what chance we will encounter that can literally change the world. The Midrash has one last line and I believe it contains the reason we read Ruth on Shavuot:

*In earlier times when man would do a mitzvah, the prophets would record it, now that there are no prophets, who records the mitzvot of man? Eliyahu and the Messiah; and God stamps it. (Vayikra Rabbah Behar 34)*

On the day that we celebrate the giving of the Torah, Ruth reminds us that the Torah is not yet complete. It is a work in progress because we continue to write it through our actions. There is a Book of Ruth and a Scroll of Esther and new stories being written every day that record our small acts and the ways they have changed the world, even without our knowing.

We can become the heroes of tomorrow about whom the next book is written through our small acts of kindness. The camera is always on. You never know which small deed you do that can have cosmic implications.

### SERVICE TIMES SHACHARIT (A.M.)

Monday & Thursday	7:15
Shabbat & Festivals	9:30

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

Friday	5:20
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**MAZALTOV**



We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

**BIRTHS**

- Naomi Schmidt on the birth of a great grandson

**MARRIAGES**

- Rabbi & Rivky Chaikin on the marriage of their son Betzalel to Miri Davidsohn in New York on the 27<sup>th</sup> June.

- Martin & Sylvia Lewison on the marriage of their daughter Kiera to Eyal Okev in Isarel on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Ronald Woolf on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June.
- Julie Lampert on her 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June.
- Mandi Stimling on her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June
- Gertie Feinstein on her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on 17<sup>th</sup> of June

- Andrea Aaron on her 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday on 23<sup>rd</sup> June
- Joe Davidovitz on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on 24<sup>th</sup> June
- Jeanette Markovitz on her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on 26<sup>th</sup> of June

**REFUAH SHLEIMA**

We wish a Speedy recovery to:

- Esme Utian



**FIRST DAY SHAVUOT – Sunday 5 June**

Shacharit 9:30 a.m.; Ten Commandments 10:30

Dairy brocha/lunch to follow service

**SECOND DAY SHAVUOT – Monday 6 June**

Shacharit 9:30 a.m.; Yizkor 10:45 a.m.

**חג שמח**