

# THE OXFORD SYNAGOGUE-CENTRE

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

5785

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May 2025

Iyar 5785

## SHABBAT TIMES

🔊 Parasha - 🕯️ Candle Lighting  
🕯️ Shabbat ends (Maariv & Havdalah)  
*For service times see page 2 & 3*

9 & 10 May – 12 Iyar  
🔊 Acharei Mot & Kedoshim  
🕯️ 5:14 – 🕯️ 6:04

16 & 17 May – 19 Iyar  
🔊 Emor  
🕯️ 5:10 – 🕯️ 6:01

23 & 24 May – 26 Iyar  
🔊 Behar & Bechukotai  
🕯️ 5:08 – 🕯️ 5:59

30 & 31 May – 4 Sivan  
🔊 Bamidbar  
🕯️ 5:06 – 🕯️ 5:57

6 & 7 June – 11 Sivan  
🔊 Nasso  
🕯️ 5:05 – 🕯️ 5:57

## RABBI'S MESSAGE

These days it is much easier to 'stay in' until the end. There are apps, phone reminders, printed Omer counters. It is hard to skip a night.

Every day of this month of Iyar, we count the days, leading up to Shavuot on 6 Sivan. This started on the second night of Pesach, for a total of 49 days. This Mitzvah of the counting of the Omer lasts for the full seven weeks, and is fully completed only when every one of the counts has been performed. Every night, at nightfall, we recite a brocha and follow that with the words, "Today is xxx days of the Omer." Sadly, if even

one day is omitted, the count continues, but without the brocha—what many refer to as being 'out the count' (this is actually a misnomer as one should continue counting nonetheless). So technology is most helpful here, as reminders are available through Omer Apps, via whatsapp, email etc. It is still possible to forget, but more difficult for sure.

What is the point of counting time? After all, it comes and goes, passes, without us really being able to control it?

A child will take his money out of the piggy-bank and count the contents. The process gives him extreme joy and makes him feel a sense of ownership over the bills and coins. He may do this, even if he knows exactly how much he has saved up, over and over.

On the other hand a bank teller also spends hours every day counting cash. However, there is nothing enjoyable about it—because she is counting somebody else's money, it causes no joy at all. It is merely a tedious task.

Counting time is about taking control and ownership of time. Instead of it just passing us by, we take charge of it and maximise every moment. Counting time is about making time count.

The count is in preparation for Shavuot, when we re-enter into the Covenant with Hashem made at Sinai. Then, we were given a detailed instruction manual on how to utilise every moment of our life, how to hallow and sanctify time. We were told how to begin our days, how to conduct our daily lives, what to do just before we retire at night. We received guidelines for the yearly cycle and our own personal life cycle.

Every Shavuot, we renew this contract. Before then we remind ourselves of the preciousness and sanctity of time.

If you are still 'in', good luck staying there until the end. And if you're out, keep on counting... every minute is precious. Either way, Chag Sameach. May you merit to fully internalise the Gift of Torah come Shavuot on 2 June.

*Rabbi Yossi Chaikin*

**FROM THE REBBETZIN**

Today I tried to get my house in order. I put away all the toys, took the linen off the beds. The biggest job of all, finding, or at least looking for, all of the things that I put in random places as I tried to make Pesach, make space on shelves for our guests and make the house appear tidy. What a job... sorting and sorting!

This week we handed over my parents' home to its new owners. That also involved hours of sorting through books, furniture, documents and all things—a lifetime of collecting and truckloads to discard. Sorting and sorting...

I am also fascinated at how much I throw away. I collect and collect, I rearrange and sort and then I discard so much. I am trying to think carefully now seeing what I really need, seeing what I really want and figuring out what is really important. What a job! Sorting and sorting...

Have a good month

*Rivky*

**DVAR TORAH**

**Believe You Me**

*By Elisha Greenbaum  
(chabad.org)*

The more similar people seem, the more they find to argue about.

I have never had an argument with an Episcopalian. Truth be told, I don't really know what Episcopalians believe. There is a Bahai temple somewhere near Haifa, which I've heard is famous for its gardens. Other than that, I know nothing about the Bahai faith or modes of worship.

I remember reading Anne of Green Gables as a kid. I was intrigued by the references to infighting between Methodists and Presbyterians described in book, which was set in Prince Edward Island, Canada. I used to wonder how two such seemingly similar creeds could inspire such enmity between neighbors and friends. I still couldn't tell you the exact differences between the two, but I bet a Methodist or Presbyterian could.

The main reason why I care so little about doctrinal differences between faiths other than my own, is because they are relatively irrelevant to my life. As long as they don't directly attack me with anti-Semitism or proselytizing activity, I can afford to be blasé about them. If anything, the less

we have in common, the less I care.

Within Judaism, however, I am less indifferent. The philosophical differences between various sects and streams of Jews bother me greatly. The fact that Reform and Orthodox Jews, for example, probably agree on certain important issues just brings the issues that we disagree about into starker contrast.

The most bloody wars are always the so-called civil ones, pitting man against countryman and brother against brother. When people agree 99% of the time, that 1% matters all the more. You can only imagine the enmity occasioned by a 0.1% doctrinal distinction between those who have 99.9% in common.

The Talmud relates that 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva died unnatural deaths in the time period between Passover and Shavuot because of a lack of respect they demonstrated to each other. Many commentators have pointed out the seeming incongruity of this tragedy. Their teacher, Rabbi Akiva, was famous for his absolute love and devotion towards every Jew, to the extent that his foundational principle in life was love thy neighbor as thyself. How could his

**SERVICE TIMES**

**SHACHARIT (A.M.)**

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

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

Friday	6:00
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students have got it so wrong?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe posited that rather than suffering from a lack of affection for their peers, this sinful lack of respect was an expression of their essential love towards their fellow students, articulated in a misplaced manner.

As students of Rabbi Akiva, they no doubt cared deeply about their mentor's teaching and devoted their lives to disseminating his views. However, as unique human beings with diverse minds and dissimilar modes of understanding, each one of them would inevitably have his own subtly distinct, individual understanding of their teacher's philosophy.

Imagine how off-putting it would have been to know that the teachings to which you have devoted your life were being misinterpreted by others. And not just any other, but a peer, a colleague, a fellow student. A man who looks like you, talks like you, sits next to you in lectures and, nonetheless, has got it all wrong.

Had they not cared about each other so deeply, it would have bothered them less. Like the old joke about two divinity students who are constantly arguing about a certain theological premise until one of them turns to the other and

suggests a compromise: "Why fight? Let's agree to disagree. You serve G-d your way, and I'll serve G-d HIS way!"

But the students of Rabbi Akiva had too much love and affection for their fellows to just let it go. It was vitally important to them and their worldview that others also appreciate the truth, as they understood it.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with trying to share your ideology and version of truth with others. In fact, an unwillingness to engage is often more a sign of uncaring than a demonstration of respect. If I truly believe in my way of life and path to happiness then, out of love for you, I seek to offer you too the opportunity to see the light.

You wish to share your version of truth with me? Please do! In fact if you hadn't tried to persuade me, I'd have assumed that either you don't really believe in what you do, or you don't care about me. A convivial, collegial meeting of the minds is in everyone's interest, and there is nothing wrong with trying to convince other people of the rightness of your cause.

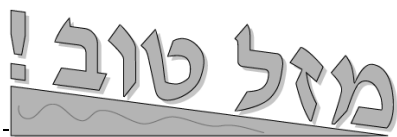
The problems start when the other person is not convinced by your persuasion, when they stick to their position and refuse to yield to the force

of your arguments. What do you do then? You've given it your best shot, but they refuse to buy in. Do you accept them absolutely, respect their decision and remain friends, or do you fail the test and reject them? Will your friendship survive this test, or will you withdraw in a sulk? Even if you maintain a relationship, but it is somewhat inhibited, then you are showing a lack of respect for them and their right to their own opinions.

This was the "sin" of Rabbi Akiva's students: not that they didn't care, but they cared too much. They were so similar, sharing so much in common, that the subtle, minor distinctions between them came to seem so important. Out of love, they tried to sway their fellows to their own way of thinking, and when that failed their love and respect decayed.

Our challenge, especially during these days of Sefirah between Passover and Shavuot, is to work on our affection and acceptance for others, to reach out in friendship to all and offer to share our beliefs and passions with them. Concurrent with this is an absolute obligation to acknowledge and accept people, no matter their reaction, and to maintain that friendship and respect.

**MAZALTOV**



We wish a hearty Mazal Tov to:

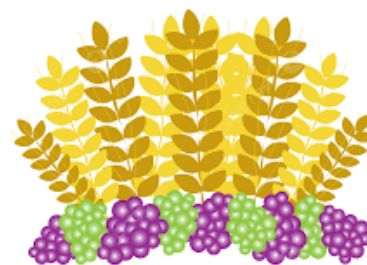
**BIRTHDAYS**

- Eric Abrahamson on his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May
- Estelle Katz on her 81<sup>st</sup> birthday on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May

- Hymie Feinberg on his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May
- Lewis Goldblatt on his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May

**BIRTH**

- Mazal Tov to Phillip and Rilla Jacobson and to Jeanette Markowitz on the birth of a great grandson born to Daniel and Chasya Friedland in Israel.



**HAPPY SHAVUOT**

**SHAVUOT BEGINS  
SUNDAY EVENING  
1 JUNE**

**READING OF TEN  
COMMANDMENTS  
MONDAY 2 JUNE**

**YIZKOR  
TUESDAY 3 JUNE**

