



The United Jewish Congregation  
of Hong Kong  
**SHABBAT SHALOM**

4 - 5 July, 2008

2 Tammuz 5768

Parashat Chukat  
(Numbers 19:1-22:1)

Rabbi Joel Oseran

#### FRIDAY, 4<sup>TH</sup> JULY

**Julie Ruth's Farewell Reception** 6:00 PM – UJC Sanctuary  
**Shabbat Service** 7:00 PM – UJC Sanctuary  
**UJC Shabbat Dinner** 8:00 PM – JCC Coffee Shop

The service will be led by Rabbi Joel Oseran.

Please come join us to welcome Rabbi Joel Oseran.

Shabbat Dinner Cost: HK\$125 (Adult), HK\$65 (Children's meal up to 12).

#### SATURDAY, 5<sup>TH</sup> JULY

**Torah Study** 9:30 AM – Apt 3C, One Robinson Place  
Led by Rabbi Joel Oseran

#### SUNDAY, 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY

**Conversion Class** 5:00 PM – Apt 3C, One Robinson Place  
Led by Rabbi Joel Oseran

#### FRIDAY, 11<sup>TH</sup> JULY

**Kabbalat Shabbat** 6:30 PM – UJC Sanctuary  
**Shabbat Service** 7:00 PM – UJC Sanctuary  
**UJC Shabbat Dinner** 8:00 PM – JCC Coffee Shop

The service will be led by Rabbi Joel Oseran.

Shabbat Dinner Cost: HK\$125 (Adult), HK\$65 (Children's meal up to 12).

Please RSVP with the UJC office by **Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> July**.

#### Yahrzeits

The following yahrzeits will be observed at services **this week**:

**Rex Bruce Randall Hayman**—Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> June. Brother of Alistaire Hayman.

**John George Howard**—Monday, 30<sup>th</sup> June. Father of Julie Howard.

**Max Rothleder**—Monday, 30<sup>th</sup> June. Grandfather of Jean Eric Salata.

**Florence Price**—Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> July. Mother of Kathy Chiron.

**Ber Goorevich**—Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> July. Father of Mirriam Bloch.

The following yahrzeits will be observed at services **next week**:

**Isidore Shriman**—Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> July. Grandfather of Mike Sherman.

**Mortimer W. Meyer**—Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> July. Grandfather of Robert Meyer.

**Rupert Groves**—Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> July. Father of Jill Dodwell-Groves.

**Jack Hochschild**—Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> July. Grandfather of Sharon Ellison.

**Alycia Michelle Kauderer**—Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> July. Cousin of Chad Rademan.

#### UJC 2008 Tribute Book

**LAST CHANCE.....get your tributes in NOW!!**

Thank you to everyone who has already sent in their donations to the Tribute Book. Funds raised play an important role in supporting Shorashim and other programming at the UJC. We hope all members will contribute to the Tribute Book, and help strengthen all of our educational initiatives.

Each year our book has a special theme – this year, the Tribute Book will be a guide to traditional Jewish food and will include a collection of members' favourite Jewish recipes. We hope that many of you will not only support us with a donation but will share your bubbe's Mandelbrot or your mother's matzo ball soup recipes!

Tribute Book request forms are available online

([www.ujc.org.hk/2008TributeBook.pdf](http://www.ujc.org.hk/2008TributeBook.pdf)). We thank you in advance for your generous support. Please send your complete form to the UJC office **before 4<sup>th</sup> July 2008**.

#### The UJC ExCo 2008/09

At our AGM, which was held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2008, the following people were elected as the UJC Executive Committee for 2008/2009:

Jonathan Kriegel, President  
Daniel Kirwin, Vice-President  
Andrew Gordon, Treasurer  
Joshua Goldman-Brown, Secretary  
Cheryl Blanco  
Brian Brenner  
Heather Brubaker  
Bob Cooper  
Gilbert Holland  
Samantha Kriegel  
Jordan Potash  
Sharon Ser  
Barbara Thomas  
Kenny Weinstein  
David Weisner

Honorary Members of the Executive Committee are:

Robert Green  
Robert Meyer  
Mark Michelson  
Charles Monat

#### Todah Rabah

To **Jordan Potash** for leading Shabbat services on 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June.

#### Farewell Reception

##### JULIE RUTH SAYS FAREWELL & INVITATION FOR 4<sup>TH</sup> JULY:

UJC member Julie Ruth (the other Julie from Melbourne!) is leaving Hong Kong and wishes to say farewell and thank you to all those who made her feel welcome in the UJC community over the past nearly two years. She will host a small Farewell Reception, together with her partner, Trevor Corran, from 6-7pm in the UJC Sanctuary on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July before services. Julie and Trevor will also stay for the usual communal Shabbat Dinner afterwards, and look forward to sharing final chat-time over dinner.

For those who can't make it for that Shabbat or who are already travelling, Julie asks if you could call her to say goodbye (9663-1343) or email her before she leaves Hong Kong (12<sup>th</sup> July). Her permanent email address is: [juliruth@ozemail.com.au](mailto:juliruth@ozemail.com.au) and she hopes to hear from you. Let her know if you're coming to Oz and she says: see you all again one day. May UJC continue to go from strength to strength!

If you plan to join the Farewell Reception, please RSVP with the UJC office.



## You don't have to be Canadian

For a number of years we have made a ritual of visiting the cemetery in Stanley on the second day of Rosh Hashanah to say Kaddish at the graves of those Jews who fell in the defense of Hong Kong.

If there is interest enough it would be nice to make a visit also to the Canadian Military Cemetery and do the same there. Many Jews were amongst those young soldiers who had barely finished basic training before they were shipped to Hong Kong to fight and die in defence of these islands.

However we have to do some onsite research before hand as the cemetery is quite large. We need to find some volunteers who would be interested in a leisurely walk round with a notebook in hand and make notes of the location of those young Jewish soldiers who are buried there.

It will soon be time when many members will be leaving for the summer so time is of the essence. If you would like to be included please call the UJC office and leave your details and I or someone else will be in touch to arrange an outing.

Alistaire Hayman

## D'var Torah by Rabbi Joel Oseran

### Did The Punishment Fit The Crime?

Among the interesting themes contained in our weekly Torah portion, Chukat (Numbers 19:1 – 22:1), is one which has deeply troubled Torah commentators and sages throughout the ages. In chapter 20 we read how the Israelites, in the wilderness of Zin, yet again complain bitterly to Moses and to Aaron that there is no food or water, that they should never have left Egypt (“Why did you make us leave Egypt to bring us to this wretched place, a place with no grain or figs or vines or pomegranates? There is not even water to drink!).

Moses and Aaron beseech God to intervene and they are instructed to take the rod and assemble the community and before the eyes of the people and order the rock to yield its water. As we all remember, Moses did take the rod but from that moment on, things went from bad to worse. Moses and Aaron told the Israelites (verses. 10 ,11) “Listen you rebels, shall we get water for you out of this rock?” And Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod. Out came copious water, and the community and their beasts drank.”

Then comes the punishment directly from God. In verse 12 we read: “But Adonai said to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not trust Me enough to affirm My sanctity in the sight of the Israelite people, therefore you shall not lead this congregation into the land that I have given them.”

This is the fateful punishment which has confused, troubled and ultimately forced the rabbis to provide some reasonable explanation for its severity. How can it be that after all Moses and Aaron have done for their people, from the confrontation with Pharaoh, through the heroic leadership of guiding the Israelites out of Egypt, to the epiphany at Sinai and the receiving of the Torah, and now the years of suffering the Israelites rebellions against having left Egypt in the first place – how can it be that after all these acts of devotion and passionate obedience to God, this one indiscretion has denied both brothers their entrance into the promised Land?

At our Torah study session on Shabbat morning in the rabbi's apartment, we shall carefully look at several rabbinic interpretations which try to resolve this dilemma (I warmly welcome you to come, share some bagels and coffee, and take part in this study). Yet, in order to provide some closure to this article, I will share with you one of the rabbinic midrashim (homiletical interpretations) which I have always found meaningful.

If you take a close look at our Torah portion, you will see that immediately after Moses and Aaron are punished by Adonai the text continues in verse 14 as if nothing whatsoever just happened. Neither Moses nor Aaron react in any way to the punishment; neither protests its severity or petitions God for leniency or compassion. It is as if nothing just happened – an entire lifetime of leadership towards an ultimate goal (entrance into the land) wiped away and not a single word in response.

Here is where the creativity of our sages comes into play. The rabbis sense that this reaction by Moses and Aaron is equally strange and perplexing. Therefore, the rabbis use this situation to teach us a valuable lesson in the fundamental nature of repentance. The rabbis suggest that Moses does not repent immediately because he assumes that he has proven his loyalty to God quite sufficiently up until this point in his life that he simply did not need to ask forgiveness. Moses assumed that he would be forgiven for his indiscretion, that his past record would “save” him. And according to the sages, this was his fatal error. Had Moses petitioned God for forgiveness, he would have been pardoned and would have entered into the promised Land. He was denied entrance into the land, not because he sinned, but because he did not repent.

Application of this human failure to our everyday lives is not difficult to make. How many of us commit indiscretions, some more some less severe, and fail to seek forgiveness or rectification, using the reasoning that the indiscretions are clearly not our customary behavior and that we are really good people inside and that, sometime down the line, we will make it all right? How many of us take for granted that people in our status and with our clear record of accomplishment, are entitled, now and then, to take certain liberties with our moral code and then continue on as if nothing happened because acknowledging our misdeeds really isn't what people like us do.

We certainly are not close to being a Moses in terms of our accomplishments or our commitment to the divine course – but maybe we do share something in common with our great leader and teacher after all. And if so, let us learn from our weekly Torah reading that it is never alright to postpone seeking forgiveness. It is never alright to assume that our past victories will carry us through our present indiscretions. Let us learn from Moses – and let us, unlike him, find entrance into our own promised land.

Shabbat Shalom  
Rabbi Joel D. Oseran