



new london
synagogue



Shavuot and Jewish Culture Month

It's been lovely watching the early results of the Jewish Culture Month appear on my various social media feeds. I've enjoyed shots of pickled cucumbers walking along the streets. I've enjoyed, particularly, the post by English Heritage of their favourite Jewish buildings, Princess Street Synagogue, the Jew House in Lincoln and so on. I love Jewish culture. My congratulations are offered to everybody involved in the project designed to bring "more joy, less oy" in these difficult times.

But now it's time for Shavuot, and Shavuot celebrates the very beginning of all of this, the moment of revelation, Matan Torah. All of our culture, all our diasporic wanderings and Zionist longings, all feed back to this one foundational moment, inexplicable as a moment, much like Rambam's drawing all of creation back to God as the First Cause. Everything, in Jewish culture, traces back to this one moment when we all stood on Sinai. It's been my favourite things to say to colleagues these last few days, particularly those across the world: see you on Sinai on Thursday night as we commemorate and celebrate Matan Torah.

That's because this gift belongs to us all, the more observant as well as the less observant, those who resonate more closely to the varied calls on our lives made by the Torah with all its 613 mitzvot, and those for whom a pickle cucumber really is at the heart of a Jewish identity. I hope you'll join us. We're learning through the night on Thursday into a dawn minyan, but particularly for our Yom Tov services on first-day Friday morning, beginning at 9:15.

On Shabbat, second day Shavuot, we have a very special bat mitzvah and we get to celebrate a coming of age for one of our younger members together with a slightly older teenager completing a four-year journey of reciting the whole of the Book of Ruth and yizkor and much else. My congratulations to them and to us all.

May this month, may this festival, come full of joy, with no oy to speak of.