

ALL ABOUT SHAVUOT

What is it?

Shavuot is the Jewish holiday that celebrates the giving of the *Torah*. The holiday is also called *Hag HaBikkurim* which is Hebrew for Holiday of the First Fruits, as it marks the beginning of the fruit harvest when the first ripe fruits were brought to the Temple as an offering of thanksgiving.



When is it?

Shavuot is the Hebrew word for “weeks.” The Torah tells us to count seven full weeks from the second day of Passover to *Shavuot*. The days in between are known as the Counting of the *Omer*. An *omer* is a unit of measure, and represents the grain offerings that were the custom in biblical times.

How do we celebrate?

Holiday Meal - *Shavuot* begins at sundown with a holiday meal which includes blessings for candles, the holiday *kiddush* (blessing over the wine) and *shehekhiyanu* (prayer of gratitude for reaching this day). Because the *Torah* mentions the offering of two loaves of bread made from new grain, it is a custom to have two loaves of bread on the table. Some people bake two loaves of *challah* side-by-side, leaving them connected so they look like the two tablets of the Ten Commandments.



Eating Dairy - It is customary to eat a dairy meal at least once during *Shavuot*. One reason is that it is a reminder of the promise that Israel would be a land flowing with “milk and honey.” Another explanation is that, the Israelites abstained from eating meat as part of their purification before receiving the *Torah*. Some also think the tradition started because it was around this time of year in ancient Israel that harvesting goat cheeses and other dairy products occurred. No one really knows how this tradition started, but it is a good excuse to indulge in dairy delicacies, like ice cream, cheesecake and blintzes.

Studying - Since *Shavuot* celebrates the giving of the *Torah*, there are many customs connected to *Shavuot* and learning. In some communities, people stay up all night to study together. This ritual is called *tikkun leil Shavuot*.

Reading the Book of Ruth - The story of Ruth, from the Bible, is about a Moabite woman who marries an Israelite man, Mahlon. Mahlon came to Moab with his family to escape famine in Israel. While in Moab, both Mahlon, his brother and his father die. Instead of staying in Moab as a widow, Ruth chooses to follow her mother-in-law, Naomi, as she returns to her home city. A beautiful example of interfaith family relations. The story highlights themes of charity, friendship, loyalty, kindness and compassion.





Suggested Activities

Studying as a Family -Since studying through the night is a *Shavuot* tradition, families can replicate this custom and make *Shavuot* a time when children are allowed to stay up late reading stories together and discussing them or watching movies with a lesson that can be discussed while enjoying dairy snacks.

Decorating with Flowers - On *Shavuot*, there's a tradition of decorating the table with fresh, beautiful flowers. There are so many wonderful ways to bring this tradition to life, pick flowers from your garden, buy flowers to decorate your home with, or make your own sustainable craft flowers.

Make Blintzes -



Crepe

1 cup flour
2 eggs
1/2 cup milk

Filling

1 lb. small curd cottage cheese
1 egg
1/4 cup sugar

Crepe Directions:

1. Mix the flour, eggs and milk together. Pour a small amount of oil in a frying pan and heat.
2. Drop a spoonful of batter into the pan, tilting it to coat the pan.
3. When the blintz is lightly browned, remove it from the pan.

Filling Directions:

1. Mix the cottage cheese, egg and sugar.
2. Place a spoonful of the mixture in the center of each blintz.
3. Roll up the blintz, tucking in the sides.
4. Place in a buttered baking dish and bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes.

For More Information

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