



IN YOUR HOME

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SHAVUOT • שבועות

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Shalom Parents,

Shavuot, meaning “weeks”, falls on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of *Sivan*, seven weeks after the first day of Passover. This year, it starts on the evening of May 18. While it is a one-day holiday in Israel as well as in some congregations outside Israel, many Diaspora congregations observe it for two days. The holiday has many meanings and customs.

The Ten Commandments were given to us more than 3300 years ago. Our Jewish ancestors came together during a great revelation at the foot of Mt. Sinai to hear and receive the *Torah*, which includes the Ten Commandments. Every year on this holiday, we renew our acceptance of this amazing gift. The Ten Commandments are read aloud from the *Torah* on the first day of *Shavuot*, in synagogues throughout the world.

The Book of Ruth, with its harvest scenes, is read in many synagogues on *Shavuot*, a harvest festival. Ruth the Moabite, a sincere convert to Judaism, was the great-grandmother of the great King David.

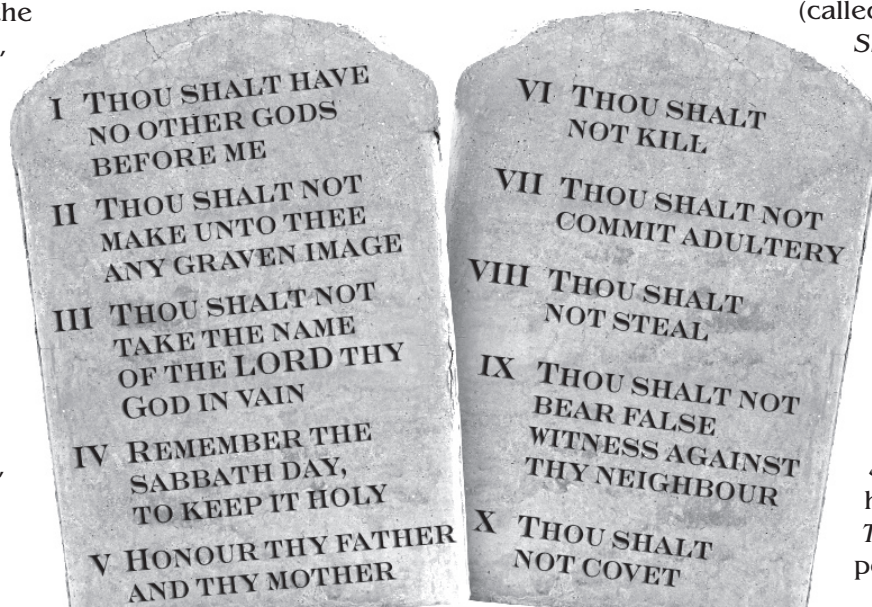
Eating dairy foods is customary on *Shavuot*. While there are many reasons given for this practice, one is that The Promised Land, which the Children of Israel were preparing to enter after having fled from Egypt, was referred to as “The land of milk and honey.”

We adorn our homes and synagogues with greenery and flowers at this time, remembering the harvest in ancient times. Also, greenery and flowers reminds us, as our Sages related, that although Mount Sinai is located in a desert, it bloomed when the *Torah* was received.

Studying is an important aspect of Shavuot.

Staying up all night to learn *Torah* (called *Tikkun Leyl*

Shavuot in Hebrew) is a practice associated with the first night of *Shavuot*. In addition, many synagogues hold confirmation services for their youth on *Shavuot*, tying together the end of the school year and students’ commitment to Judaism, with the historical giving of the *Torah* to the Jewish people.



EXPRESSING THANKFULNESS

The *shehecheyanu* blessing of Thanksgiving (said on this festival as well as on other major holidays) reminds us that the world is a good place and we are happy to be part of it.

Bah-rooch Ah-tah A-do-nai El-lo-hay-nu Me-lech Ha-oh-lam She-he-che-ya-nu V'kee-ma-nu V'hi'gi-ah-nu Laz-man Ha-zeh

Praised are you, *A-do-nai* our God, Sovereign of the Universe; who has kept us alive, sustained us, and helped us to reach this moment.

With your child: Say the blessing when lighting the holiday candles. Then discuss what each of you is grateful for.

STUDYING AND EATING

Studying a Judaic topic with your child at home on the first evening of *Shavuot* can be fun and memorable. Two *Shavuot* traditions (all-night, (or at least late-night) study and eating dairy foods) can be combined.

With your child: Have a pajama and ice cream party. Act out the story of Ruth and Naomi.

TELLING THE STORY**Materials:**

The story of Ruth (page 3)
Drawing paper
Markers (in a variety of colors)
Tape (scotch or masking)

With your child: After telling the story of Ruth, draw pictures of it. Then help him place the pictures in order (in proper sequence; beginning on the right side and moving to the left). Tape the papers together, making a long horizontal strip of story pictures. Then roll up the papers, starting from the left side, creating a scroll. The picture describing the beginning of the story will be on top. Point out that books written in English go from left to right. The story of Ruth, written in



Hebrew, goes from right to left. The children can tell the story as they unwrap the scroll and look at the pictures they've created.

COOKING**Israeli Salad**

Since *Shavuot* is a harvest festival from The Land of Israel, it's appropriate to prepare foods that remind us of Israel.

Ingredients:

2 cucumbers
2 tomatoes
1 pepper (green, red or yellow)
2 spring onions
olive (or vegetable) oil
lemon juice
salt
pepper
zaatar (optional. This herb can be purchased from a Middle Eastern market)



With your child: Cut up the vegetables into small pieces. Just before serving, season them lightly (to taste) with oil, lemon juice, salt, pepper and zaatar. The secret to making really good Israeli salad is using fresh vegetables and chopping them finely.

Honey Milk Balls

As we create these treats we remember that the *Torah* describes Israel as a "land flowing with milk and honey."

Ingredients

2 cups cereal flakes
½ cup dry milk
¼ cup honey
½ cup coconut

With your child: Mix all ingredients together; and form into balls.

APPRECIATING NATURE

With your child: Visit a park, or a botanical garden or a farm. Encourage her to discuss the things she sees and experiences in nature. Note things that were created by God and those that were made by people.



MAKING FLOWERS

Decorate your home or synagogue with flowers. In addition to using real flowers and greens, you and your children can make them.

Materials

Green crepe paper
Glue
Scissors
A few plastic straws
A few pieces of construction paper (red or pink)
A pencil
Scotch tape



With your child: Cut a strip of crepe paper (about 10 inches long and 1-2 inches wide). Rub glue all over a straw. Then wrap the crepe paper around the straw, starting at the top and continuing in a circular fashion, completely covering the straw with paper. Set aside the stem you've created. Now draw an outline of your child's hand on the construction paper (with her palm down on the paper). Cut out the outline. Roll each outlined finger around the pencil. Remove the pencil after the paper is rolled. Attach the wrist of the hand outline to the straw with scotch tape. Make a few more hand outlines, roll up the finger outlines and attach the wrists to the straw with scotch tape. Place your flower in a vase and decorate your holiday table.

THE BOOK OF RUTH TO TELL TO CHILDREN

A long time ago, Naomi lived with her husband and two sons and their wives in a land called Moav. After Naomi's husband and sons died, she decided to go back to her home in the Land of Israel. She told her two daughters-in-law. "I miss my home in Bethlehem, in the Land of Israel. Now that I am old, I must go back. You two stay here with your families."

One daughter-in-law did as Naomi said, but the other one, Ruth, said "I'll go with you to Bethlehem." Nothing Naomi said could change Ruth's mind. So they went together to the Land of Israel.

It was a very, very long way to go and it took them a long time to reach

Bethlehem. When they finally got there they were tired and hungry and had no money or food. "I have an idea," said Ruth. "Since this is the beginning of the harvest, I'll go to the fields and pick up grain that was left there by the farmers during the harvest. Needy people are allowed to do that, so the farmers won't mind at all. Then we will have food."

"What a wonderful idea!" said Naomi. She was very happy that Ruth had come with her to Bethlehem. Day after day, Ruth worked hard in the fields picking up grain left behind by the farmer. She and Naomi had enough to eat. While Ruth was working in the fields, Naomi worked hard at home. They took care of each other.



Boaz, the owner of the field, was happy to share his grain with those who needed the food. He was a kind and generous man. When Boaz and Ruth got to know each other, they fell in love. After a while they were married. Then, after some more time passed, Ruth gave birth to a baby boy that she named Oved. Naomi lived with Ruth and Boaz and took care of Oved. Naomi

knew she always had a home with Ruth and Boaz and she loved taking care of the baby.

When Oved grew up, he had a son named Jesse. Jesse grew up and had a son named David. David grew up and became a famous Jewish King of Israel. The *Torah* has many stories about King David.

SHARING JEWISH VALUES WITH OUR CHILDREN

Shavuot offers a perfect time for us to demonstrate *mitzvot* (commandments from the *Torah* that guide us in doing the right thing) with our children. How do we know the right thing to do? Can we teach those things to our children? The *Torah* guides us.

Tikkun Olam (pronounced tea-kune oh-lahm)— Repairing the world. This includes helping others, caring for the earth's people and its environment; and valuing nature.

Hachnasat Orchim (pronounced hach-nah-saht or-cheem) — Welcoming guests; including family members, friends and those new to the community.

Talmud Torah (pronounced tal-mood to-rah) — Studying and telling *Torah* and holiday stories.

These are only a few of many Jewish values that can and should be shared with our children as we prepare for and celebrate *Shavuot*. Reading books together and engaging in discussions usually leads to very interesting questions, which then leads to further discussions. Most importantly, though, is the role-modeling that our behavior presents to our children. We are their first teachers.



A RECOMMENDED SELECTION OF BOOKS

A Mountain of Blintzes by B.D. Goldin, Gulliver/Harcourt, 2001. How can a poor family with five children get ingredients to make blintzes and celebrate *Shavuot*? In this entertaining story, the children devise a plan that ends with a heaping platter of delectable blintzes—cheese or fruit-filled crepes—for which the recipe is provided. The fun story and its beautiful watercolor illustrations delight three to eight year olds.

The Story of Ruth by M.R. Schur, Kar-Ben Publishing, Inc., 2005. The popular biblical story of Ruth and Naomi, retold in this beautifully illustrated picture book, is loved by four to eight year olds.

Ten Good Rules: A Counting Book by S.R. Topek, Kar-Ben Publishing, 2007. Each of the Ten Commandments received by Moses on Mt. Sinai is presented in clear and age appropriate language, accompanied by appealing photographs of children. Three to six year olds enjoy this book.

Torah Talk by M. Feinberg, Y. Chubara and R. Rotenberg, Behrman House Publishing Co., 1989. A selection of Bible stories, rewritten to be read to three to seven year olds, is accompanied by follow-up questions, discussion topics and creative activities.

Who Knows Ten? By M. Cone, UAHC Press, 1998. Each of the Ten Commandments is presented through an illustrative story. This book is appropriate for four to seven year olds.

Sammy Spider's First Shavuot by S.A. Rouss, Kar-Ben Publishing, 2008. Sammy Spider and his mother watch and learn as Mrs. Shapiro makes blintzes for *Shavuot*. This beautifully illustrated book includes a blintz recipe and a story explaining the meaning of *Shavuot*. Three to six year olds love the book.

No Rules for Michael, by S. A. Rouss, Kar-Ben, 2003. Michael thinks school would be more fun without rules and he gets his wish. But is it exactly what he was hoping for? Four to seven year olds love this *Shavuot* story.

AND OTHER RESOURCES

CDs:

Jewish Holiday Songs From Rosh Hashanah to Shavuot, Sung by various artists.

Celebrate With Cindy: Jewish Holiday Music For Children by Cindy Paley.

Both CDs can be enjoyed by the entire family.

Websites:

www.ou.org/holidays

www.alljudaica.com

www.holidays.net/

www.judaicaforkids.com



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