



Shavuot



When is *Shavuot*?

- Begins at sundown of the 5th day of *Sivan*, exactly fifty days after Passover.
- This year (5776 / 2016), *Shavuot* starts at sundown Saturday, June 11th, and lasts for one or two days,
- The Hebrew date of *Shavuot* is always the 6th and 7th of *Sivan*.



What does *Shavuot* celebrate?

- *Shavuot* celebrates the time when the first fruits were harvested and brought to the Holy Temple
- It is also known as *Chag HaBikurim* (the Festival of the First Fruits).
- *Shavuot* is also the wheat harvest festival – *Chag Hakatzir* (the Feast of Harvest).
- *Shavuot* is also called *Zman Matan Torateinu*, (the "Time of the Giving of Our Torah")



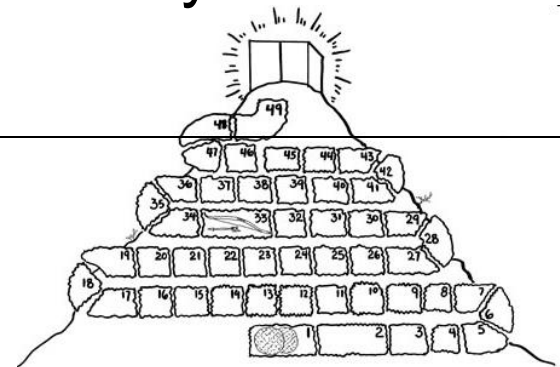
Why do we celebrate *Shavuot*?

- On *Shavuot* we remember the giving of the *Torah* on Mt. Sinai over 3,300 years ago.
- In the *Torah*, *Shavuot* is also called Feast of Weeks.
- In Hebrew, the word "*Shavuot*" means "weeks" and stands for the seven weeks during which the Israelites prepared themselves to get the *Torah*.
- During this time they left slavery behind and became a holy nation ready to stand before God.



Counting the *Omer*

- The period from Passover to *Shavuot* is a time of great anticipation.
- We count each of the days from the second day of Passover to the day before *Shavuot*, 49 days or 7 full weeks
- The counting reminds us of the important connection between Passover and *Shavuot*:
 - Passover freed us physically from slavery,
 - The giving of the *Torah* on *Shavuot* saved us spiritually from our slavery to idolatry and immorality.



Why was the Giving of the *Torah* Important?

- The giving of the *Torah* was far more than a moment in history.
- It was a spiritual moment that touched the essence of the Jewish soul.
- Rabbis have compared it to a wedding between God and the Children of Israel. We became God's special nation and Adonai became our God.



The Experience at Mt. Sinai

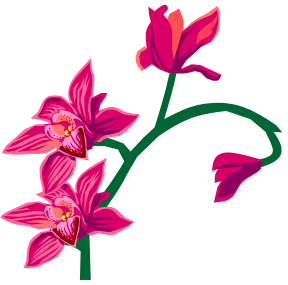
- The entire universe, our Sages say, trembled with the sound of the ram's horn.
- Thunder and lightning filled the skies. Then - - silence.
- Not a bird chirped. No creature spoke. The seas did not stir.
- Even the angels ceased to fly, as the voice was heard:

"I am the Lord your God ..."

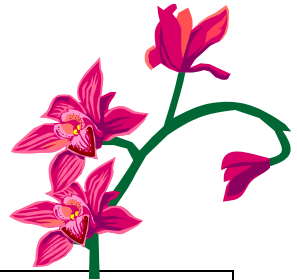


The 10 Commandments

1. I am Adonai, your God who took you out from the land of Egypt.
2. Have no other gods before Me.
3. Do not take the name of God in vain.
4. Remember Shabbat and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. Do not murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not steal.
9. Do not bear false witness.
10. Do not want what your neighbor has.



SHAVUOT CUSTOMS: : Decorations



- Decorating of our homes and synagogues with flowers, leaves, branches, and greens.
- Many reasons have been given for this custom.
 - Flowers: The Rabbis taught that although Mt. Sinai was situated in a desert, in honor of the *Torah* the desert bloomed.

SHAVUOT CUSTOMS: ***Tikun Layl Shavuot***

- All-night *Torah* study on the first night of Shavuot
- On the day the Children of Israel were to receive the *Torah*, the nation overslept.
- As an atonement, people should remain awake the entire night of *Shavuot* as a way to fix this mistake



SHAVUOT CUSTOMS: EATING DAIRY FOODS

- It is customary to eat a dairy meal at least once on *Shavuot*.
- There are several reasons for eating a dairy meal on *Shavuot*:
 - On *Shavuot*, the Children of Israel had just received the *Torah* (and the laws of Kashrut), and they did not have both separate dishes yet, therefore their meal was a dairy meal.
 - The *Torah* is compared to milk
 - The word for milk, *Chalav* חלב, has the numerical value of 40, corresponding to the 40 days Moses spent on Mt. Sinai.



SHAVUOT CUSTOMS: READING THE BOOK OF RUTH

- The Book of Ruth is read on *Shavuot*.
- Many reasons are given for this practice:
 - The entire Torah is about loving kindness, and this *Megillah* consists of loving kindness, therefore it is read on the day of the giving of the Torah.
 - Ruth's conversion took place “at the beginning of the barley harvest”
 - The Giving of the *Torah* marks the beginning of the Jewish Nation, when they entered into the covenant with God. *Megillat Ruth* tells how Ruth entered into that covenant.
 - *Megillat Ruth* is the history of the roots of King David. The last verse, which continues the line of Boaz’ descendants, ends with David. Since *Shavuot* is the birthday and *Yahrzeit* of King David, we read Ruth on *Shavuot*.

