



# Shavuot

ו ٦ & ז סיוון • ו & ז Sivan •

Questions and Answers to  
help you more fully experience  
and enjoy this holiday



## **What does the word Shavuot mean?**

Shavuot means weeks. Sometimes Shavuot is called the Festival of Weeks because we count each of the days from the second day of Passover to the day before Shavuot, 49 days or 7 full weeks.

## **What does Shavuot commemorate?**

The Talmud teaches that God gave the Jews the Ten Commandments on the morning of the 6th of Sivan, the first day of Shavuot.

The holiday is also linked to the harvesting of wheat and the ripening of the first fruit in the land of Israel.

## **When does Shavuot take place?**

Shavuot takes place on the 6th and 7th days of the Hebrew month of Sivan, beginning the evening before with an all night Torah study, or *tikkun*.

## **Why is Shavuot considered one of the "Three Pilgrimage Festivals?"**

On Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot, ancient Israelites journeyed on foot to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple. Because these journeys were long and difficult for most Jews, they took on the character of pilgrimage.

## **Why is the Book of Ruth read on Shavuot?**

Ruth, a Moabite woman who wished to join the Jewish people, describes the essence of what it means to be a Jew. She accepted Judaism with the simple statement, "Your people shall be my people and your God my God..." Her devotion is considered a model for a Jew's loyalty to the Torah. There are two other literary connections: 1. Her story of faith and devotion took place during the harvest season, and 2. Our tradition teaches us that King David, a descendant of Ruth, was born on Shavuot, and that he died on Shavuot.

## **What do you do on Shavuot?**

In celebration, many Jews assemble the whole night in the synagogue to study Torah, other biblical books, sections of the Talmud and additional sacred writings. This annual all-night gathering is called a *tikkun*. At daybreak, the participants break from study and recite the morning prayer service.

It is also customary to eat a dairy meal at least once during Shavuot. One reason is that it is a reminder of the promise regarding the land of Israel, a land flowing with "milk and honey." Another thought is that it is because our ancestors had just received the Torah (and the dietary laws therein) and did not have both meat and dairy dishes available.

### **Cheese Blintzes**

from [www.celebrationsguide.org](http://www.celebrationsguide.org)

Batter:

4 eggs

2 cups water (or 1 cup milk and 1 cup water)

1-2 tsp. salt

2 cup flour

Filling:

1 pound cottage cheese, strained

1 egg yolk

1/3 cup sugar

touch of vanilla



Combine eggs, milk, salt and flour in that order.

Heat a small amount of oil in a 6-inch or 7- inch frying pan.

Pour in just enough batter to make a very thin crepe. Quickly tilt pan from side to side to spread batter evenly across pan. When crepe pulls away from the side of the pan, flip and fry for just a few seconds on the second side.

Remove crepe from pan and stack on a plate. Continue to make crepes with the batter until no batter remains.

Blend cheese, egg yolk, and sugar.

Put a spoonful of filling toward one end of the crepe and roll the crepe. Bake 10 minutes in a 400 degree oven.

### **Why do Reform synagogues often have Confirmation linked to Shavuot?**

Because Shavuot represents the time when Israel confirmed its faith and its commitment to Judaism by accepting the Torah and forging a covenant with God. Confirmation is a group ceremony that takes place at the end of the 10th grade which allows our students an opportunity after becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah to “confirm” their faith and commitment to Judaism.

### **Why does our tradition teach that Shavuot is the most pleasant of all Jewish holidays?**

Passover freed us physically from bondage, but the giving of the Torah on Shavuot redeemed us spiritually from our bondage to idolatry and immorality.

### **A final note...**

Shavuot is a time of the giving of the Torah, rather than the time of the receiving of the torah. The sages point out that we are constantly in the process of receiving the Torah, and that we receive it every day, but it was first given at this time. Thus it is the giving, not the receiving, that makes this holiday significant.

### **What Is Outreach?**

Outreach is an effort by the Reform Jewish community to welcome and include those seeking a stronger connection to Judaism, as Jews-by-Choice, interfaith couples and families, parents of interfaith married children, or anyone interested in knowing more about Judaism.

Outreach does not seek to convert non-Jewish partners. Rather, it enables them to explore, study and come to understand Judaism, thereby providing an atmosphere of support in which a comfortable relationship with Judaism can be fostered.

Outreach encourages people to make Jewish choices in their lives through community support and adult education, and by making Jewish resources at Temple Chai readily available.

Outreach educates and sensitizes the Jewish community to be receptive to Jews-by-Choice and intermarried couples.

Outreach enables children and young people to clarify issues, to strengthen their Jewish identity, and to examine the implications of interdating and interfaith marriage.

This brochure was created by Temple Chai clergy and congregants  
under the loving guidance of Toni Dusik.

**Temple Chai**  
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