



## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLIDAY OF SHAVUOT

Submitted by: TALIA RUBIN

Subject Area: Holidays  
Target Age Group: 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

Lesson Objective: This lesson is meant introduce the holiday of Shavuot to young students. They need to know very little about the concepts to be able to participate successfully in this lesson. It's both hands on, and verbal, so that it appeals to different learning styles.

### **Discussion on the Background of Purim:**

- Shavuot is a two day festival (one in Israel) it is to celebrate the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. Shavuot falls on the fiftieth day after the beginning of Passover.
- Shavuot is celebrated seven weeks and one day after Passover. Shavuot is a one day celebration in Israel and two days in the Diaspora (outside of Israel).
- Shavuot is known by other names:
  - Chag HaShavuot (The Feast of Weeks)
  - Chag HaBikurim (The Festival of First Fruits)
  - Chag HaKatzir (The Harvest Festival)
- The night before Shavuot is dedicated to the study of the Torah. This tradition is let HaShem know that we want to study his Torah and we start at sundown beginning Shavuot and many study throughout the night showing their dedication.
- Shavuot is 50 days after Passover (the 6th of Sivan) and the word Shavuot means "weeks" because it is 7 weeks after Passover.
- The Torah tells us that we celebrate this holiday because of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. In Exodus chapter 19 and 20 we are told that HaShem gave us the commandments.
- It is an interesting fact that the holiday celebrates the "giving" of the Torah, rather than "receiving" it. Our sages pointed out that we are constantly "receiving" the Torah but that this was the first time that we were "given" the Torah and that is why the holiday is special.
- Today Shavuot is celebrated in synagogues around the world by reading the **Book of Ruth** and a very beautiful poem called **Akdmut**.
- Eating Dairy  
It is a custom to eat at least one dairy meal during Shavuot. There are two main stories given for the dairy meal. One is that it is a reminder of the promise about the land of Israel flowing with milk and honey. Another story for the dairy meal is that when we received the Torah and then knew the laws of Kashrut, we could eat only a dairy meal because there was no kosher meat available.



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- **Bikkurim festival**  
Many synagogues have their religious schools participate in a Bikkurim festival. The children march around holding baskets of fruit which are placed on the pulpit and later donated to hospitals or the poor. This is to remind us that Shavuot is one of the three pilgrimage holidays when in Ancient times Jews brought their first fruits to the Temple as an offering to HaShem. The first fruits were called ***Bikkurim***.
  
- **Decorating with flowers and plants**  
Shavuot's significance as an agricultural festival is seen by bringing the outdoors inside. Homes and Synagogues are decorated with a variety of plants, flowers and greenery. School children wear flower garlands around their necks and help decorate the house and school with plants and leaves.
  
- **Tradition says that the reason for decorating with plants and flowers is that when the Torah was given at Mount Sinai, the barren desert bloomed with flowers as the earth itself rejoiced.**
  
- **A Torah all night party**  
The Midrash tells us that the Israelites overslept on the day that they received the Torah. It has become a custom to stay up all night and read and discuss the Torah to show HaShem that we are excited to receive the Torah.
  
- **Confirmation**  
Shavuot is also a time that many reconfirm their commitment to Judaism. Reform Jews and some others celebrate a confirmation ceremony in which 10th graders affirm their commitment to the Torah and to Judaism.

**ACTIVITY:** Do craft project- making the 10 commandments, found at:  
[http://www.akhlah.com/holidays/shavuot/shavuot\\_craft\\_10\\_commandments.php](http://www.akhlah.com/holidays/shavuot/shavuot_craft_10_commandments.php)

**Workbook:** complete approximately 5 pages

**Essential Question(s) that will lead to this understanding (also taken from curriculum):**

- When does Shavuot fall?
- Why do we celebrate Shavuot?
- During Shavuot, what kind of meal is it customary to eat?

**Quiz Bowl Review** (directions below)

**Supplies:**

- Workbook: "Shalom Alef Bet- A Pre-Primer for Shalom Uvrachah" by Pearl Tarnor



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- Quiz Bowl Review Game:
  - Directions: Take a large piece of paper or foam core and make 9 pockets in it (laid out in a similar fashion to “Tick-tack-toe”) Place a piece of one of the two sides of Velcro on each pocket. This board will be reused every time the review game is played. Next, for each class, make nine note cards pertaining to the material taught that day, and place them face-down in the pockets. Cut out 4 X’s and 4 O’s, then place the remaining side of the Velcro on the backside of each to secure to the pieces on the game board as they are won (these pieces will also be reused during each game). The class should be divided into 2 teams, and the first team to get tick-tack-toe with the correct answers wins!

