



MOSAIC

A PUBLICATION OF THE MONTREAL TORAH CENTER
BAIS MENACHEM CHABAD LUBAVITCH

SHAVUOT GUIDE



6-7 SIVAN
Thursday evening, May 28 until
Shabbat nightfall, May 30



BAIS MENACHEM
CHABAD LUBAVITCH

**CHAG SAMEACH!
HAPPY SHAVUOT!**

SPECIAL MESSAGE IN LIGHT OF COVID 19
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What is Shavuot?

Shavuot is the second of the three major festivals (Passover being the first and Sukkot the third) and comes exactly fifty days after Passover. The Torah was given by G-d to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai 3,332 years ago. Every year on this day we renew our acceptance of G-d's gift.

The word Shavuot means 'weeks'. It marks the completion of the seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot (the 'Omer' period) during which the Jewish people prepared themselves for the giving of the Torah. During this time they cleansed themselves of the scars of slavery and became a holy nation ready to enter into an eternal covenant with G-d with the giving of the Torah.

The Giving of the Torah



The giving of the Torah was a far-reaching spiritual event — one that touched the essence of the Jewish soul then and for all time. Our Sages have compared it to a wedding between G-d and the Jewish people. One of the many names of Shavuot is the Day of the Great

Oath, (the word 'shvuah' also means oath). On this day G-d swore eternal devotion to us, and we in turn pledged everlasting loyalty to Him.

On this day we received a gift from Above which we could not have achieved with our own limited faculties. We received the ability to reach and touch the Divine; to be not only **cultivated** human beings, but human beings connected to G-d, above and beyond the limitations of nature.

What is the Torah?

The Torah is composed of two parts: the *Written Law* and the *Oral Law*. The written Torah contains the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets and the Writings. Together with the Written Torah, Moses was also given the Oral Law which explains and clarifies the Written law. It was transmitted orally from generation to generation and eventually transcribed in the Talmud, Midrash and Zohar.

The word *Torah* means *instruction* or *guide*. The word *mitzvah* means both *commandment* and *connection*.

There are 613 commandments. The positive commandments ('do'), numbering 248, are equivalent to the number of organs in the human body. The 365 negative commandments ('don't do') are equivalent to the number of blood vessels in the human body.

Through the study of Torah and fulfillment of mitzvahs we connect ourselves and our environment to G-d. G-d's purpose in creating the world is that we sanctify all of creation, imbuing it with holiness and spirituality.

Why was the Torah given in the wilderness and not in the land of Israel?

The Torah was given freely, in an ownerless public place. If it had been given in the land of Israel, the nations of the world would say that they have no



portion in it. Anyone who wishes to properly accept it is welcome to do so. Why was Mount Sinai chosen to be the site for the giving of the Torah? The conventional answer is that the choice of Mount Sinai was to teach us humility, since Mount Sinai is a small and, therefore, 'humble' mountain. However, if so, why was it not given in a low lying valley? Surely that would have been a stronger lesson in humility?

Hence we learn, that a Jew must be able to distinguish between being proud and being arrogant. Arrogance is distasteful. Being proud of one's Jewishness is a virtue and necessary. The Torah therefore, was given on a **humble mountain**.

What are the other names of Shavuot?

Atzeret "The Completion"

Together with Passover, this holiday forms the completion of a unit. We gained our freedom on Passover in order to receive the Torah on Shavuot.



Chag Habikurim "Festival of the First Fruits"

In an expression of thanks to G-d as commanded in the Torah, beginning on Shavuot, each far-

mer in the Land of Israel brought to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem the first **wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates** that grew in his fields.

Chag HaKotzir "Festival of the Harvest"

Wheat, the last of the grains to be ready to be cut, was harvested at this time of the year.

All night long...

On the first night of Shavuot throughout the world, Jews observe the centuries-old custom of conducting an all-night vigil dedicated to Torah learning. One explanation for this tradition is that the Jewish people did not rise early on the day G-d gave the Torah, and that it was necessary for G-d Himself to awaken them. To compensate for their behavior, Jews have accepted upon themselves the custom of remaining awake all night.



Why is it customary to eat a dairy meal on Shavuot?

There are a number of reasons for the custom of eating a dairy meal on Shavuot:

With the giving of the Torah the Jews now become obligated to observe the laws of Kashruth. As the Torah was given on Shabbat no cattle could be slaughtered nor could utensils be koshered, and thus on that day they ate dairy.

Another reason that the Torah is likened to milk. The word in Hebrew for milk is 'cholov' – חלב. When the number value of each of the letters in the word cholov are added together – ח = 8; ל = 30; ו = 2; – the total is

'ERUV TAVSHILLIN'

This year, the second day of Shavuot occurs on Shabbat. In order to be able to prepare the Shabbat food on Friday – which this year is Yom Tov – (inasmuch that we do not cook etc. on Shabbat) a special ritual and blessing, involving the designation of two prepared foods for Shabbat, called 'Eruv Tavshillin' is required to be performed during the day of erev Yom Tov, on Thursday, May 28. Please consult your siddur on how to do the 'Eruv Tavshillin'.

forty. Forty is the number of days Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Torah.

The Book of Ruth

In many synagogues the book of Ruth is read on the second day of Shavuot. There are several reasons for this custom: A) Shavuot is the birthday and yarzeit (day of passing) of King David, and the book of Ruth records his ancestry. Ruth and her husband Boaz were King David's great-grandparents. B) The scenes of harvesting, described in the book of Ruth are appropriate to the Festival of Harvest. C) Ruth was a sincere convert who embraced Judaism with all her heart. On Shavuot all Jews formally entered into the covenant with G-d by accepting to observe the Torah and all of its precepts.



What is the significance of flowers and greenery on Shavuot?



It is customary on Shavuot to adorn the home and synagogue with fruits, flowers and greens. The reason is that in the time of the Holy Temple, the first fruits of harvest were brought to the Temple on Shavuot. As well, our Sages related that although Mount Sinai was situated in a desert, when the Torah was given the mountain bloomed and sprouted flowers.

If, for whatever reason, this ritual was not performed, it is still permissible to prepare (cook, etc. on a flame/burner that has been on since before the onset of the Yom Tov) for Shabbat on Friday, as the Eruv Tavshillin can be performed by any one individual on behalf of the community.

Candle Lighting Times and Blessings

Thursday, May 28

Sivan 5
Light candles at 8:14 pm
Blessing 1 & 3

Friday, May 29

Sivan 6
Light candles at 8:15 pm*
Blessing 2 & 3

Saturday, May 30

Sivan 7 • Yizkor
Yom Tov and Shabbat ends 9:31 pm

Blessings

- Baruch Atah Ado-nai
Elo-heinu Melech Haolam
Asher Kiddishanu
Bemitzvotav Vetzivanu
Lehadlik Ner Shel Yom Tov.

*Blessed are You, G-d our L-rd,
Sovereign of the universe,
who has sanctified us with
His commandments, and
commanded us to kindle
the Yom Tov lights.*

- Baruch Atah Ado-nai.
Elo-heinu. Melech Haolam
Asher Kiddishanu Bemitzvotav.
Vetzivanu Lehadlik Ner Shel
Shabbat Veshel Yom Tov.

*Blessed are You, G-d our Lord,
Sovereign of the universe,
who has sanctified us with
His commandments, and
commanded us to kindle the
lights of Shabbat and Yom Tov.*

- Baruch Atah Ado-nai
Elo-heinu Melech Haolam
She-heh-cheh-yanu
Ve-kee-ma-nu Ve-he-geyanu
Lizman Hazeh.

*Blessed are You, G-d our L-rd,
Sovereign of the universe, who
has granted us life, sustained
us and enabled us to reach
this occasion.*

*Light from a pre-existing flame.

(A pre-existing flame is a flame burning continuously since the onset of the festival, such as a pilot light, gas or candle flame.)

SPECIAL MESSAGE IN LIGHT OF COVID19

Dear Friend,

In the **past**, on this back page, you would find a poster encouraging **children** to be present in **Synagogue** on the first day of **Shavuot** when the **Ten Commandments** are read from the Torah. Our Sages tell us that G-d agreed to give the Jewish people His holy Torah on the condition that they furnish **guarantors**. The **only offer** that G-d found satisfactory was the offer of **our children** i.e. the promise to provide them with a Torah education. Hence every year on Shavuot, when the Torah is given to us anew by G-d, it is the children in particular that G-d wants to see in Synagogue.

This year, as things stand, this may not be possible.

We would like to suggest therefore, that this year, especially those of you who have **children** at home, that the **family gather around** on **Shavuot day, Friday the 29th of May and read the Ten Commandments** and perhaps some of the insights contained in this guide.

Additionally, we encourage you to say the following **prayers** together for **health** and **blissing** in all good things.

The Ten Commandments:

1. *I am G-d your L-rd who took you out of the land of Egypt.*
2. *You shall have no other gods before me.*
3. *Do not take the name of G-d your L-rd in vain.*
4. *Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.*
5. *Honor your father and mother.*
6. *Do not murder.*
7. *Do not commit adultery.*
8. *Do not steal.*
9. *Do not bear false witness.*
10. *Do not covet.*

The prayers:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד
Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad.
Hear O Israel, G-d is our L-rd, G-d is One.

בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד
Baruch shem k'vod malchuto l'olam va'ed.
Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom
for ever and ever.

תּוֹרַת צִוְיָה לְנוּ מִשֵּׁה מוֹרְשָׁה קְהֵלַת יַעֲקֹב
Torah tzivah lanu Moshe, morashah kehilat Yaakov.
The Torah that Moses commanded us is the heritage
of the congregation of Jacob.

אֲךְ צַדִּיקִים יוֹדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ יֵשְׁבוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת פְּנֵיךָ
Ach tzadikim yodu lishmecha yeshvu yisharim et panecha.

Indeed, the righteous will extol Your Name;
the upright will dwell securely in Your presence.

May Hashem bless us all with good health, growth in all good things and, above all, with peace in Israel and the world over, in a world perfected and redeemed with the coming of Moshiach without delay, amen.