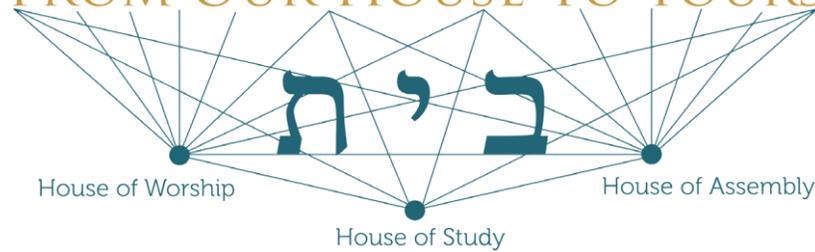


# FROM OUR HOUSE TO YOURS



90 Years of Connection 1925-2015

*Please enjoy this revised version of “From Our House to Yours,” originally written by Suzanne Schonfeld, to enhance this year’s celebration of Shavuot!*

## CELEBRATING SHAVUOT AT HOME HOLIDAY ENHANCEMENT PACKET

Shavuot, which means literally “weeks” in Hebrew, occurs 50 days after the beginning of Passover, on the 6th and 7th days of Sivan. It marks the end of the seven weeks of counting the Omer. The Greek translation of Shavuot would be “Pentecost”, or the 50th day. Shavuot begins this year on the evening of May 28 and continues through May 30.

Shavuot is one of the three Pilgrimage Festivals (Sukkot and Pesach are the other two), when Jewish people would come to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices at the Temple. It is also known by different names:

1. *Hag HaKatzir*, or the Harvest Festival.
2. *Yom HaBikkurim*, or the Day of the First Fruits. People would come to Jerusalem to offer their first ripe fruits, as well as bread made from the newly harvested wheat.
3. *Zeman Matan Torateinu*, or The Time of the Giving of Our Torah.

On Shavuot, the Torah reading includes a reading of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 19:1–2:26). We also read about the mystical vision of the Divine Chariot by Ezekiel in the Haftarah on the first day.

## CELEBRATING SHAVUOT WITH B’NAI ISRAEL

### TIKKUN LEYL SHAVUOT

Thursday, May 28, 7:00 PM

Why did we “sign up for Torah?” For thousands of years we have survived thanks to our continuous engagement with Torah—sometimes fraught and sometimes joyful. Please watch [these pre-recorded Torah study sessions](#) and then join us on Thursday night to discuss these topics and reflect on why you have “signed up for Torah.”

*Our evening of study is presented in memory of Rabbi Henry and Yetta Segal.*

### SERVICE TIMES

**Thursday, May 28** - Erev Shavuot  
7:00 PM *Tikkun Leyl Shavuot*  
8:00 PM *Mincha/Festival Ma’ariv*

**Friday, May 29** - 1st Day of Shavuot  
9:00 AM *Yom Tov Service*  
6:15 PM *Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat/Ma’ariv*

**Saturday, May 30** - 2nd Day of Shavuot  
9:00 AM *Yom Tov Service with Yizkor*

# Customs

- It has become customary to stay up all night on Shavuot to study passages from the Bible, Talmud and the Zohar because the Kabbalists would do so. This custom is called *Tikkun Leyl Shavuot*. One explanation is that we are atoning for the behavior of the Israelites when they were at Mount Sinai. They slept late and had to be awakened by Moses. Another theory is that lightning and thunder that kept the Israelites awake while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Torah.
- In some communities, people stay up all night on the second night as well, to read the entire Book of Psalms. It is believed that King David, designated as the author of Psalms, was born and died on Shavuot.
- Still others read a special *ketubah*, or marriage contract, that is symbolic of the “wedding” of God and Israel that was celebrated on Mount Sinai.
- We read the Book of Ruth in the synagogue on the first day of Shavuot because the story takes place during the harvest time and because Shavuot is the anniversary of the birth and death of King David. Ruth and her husband Boaz were the great grandparents of King David.
- It is customary to decorate with plants and flowers. Some envision the Torah as a Tree of Life. When the Torah was given, Mount Sinai was said to have bloomed and flowers grew, even though it is located in a desert!
- Shavuot is designated as the Day of Judgment for the Trees? God is said to determine how much fruit each tree will produce.
- Greenery is also remembered in the story of baby Moses, who was found in the reeds on the 6th of Sivan, the date that we celebrate Shavuot.
- It is customary to eat dairy foods on Shavuot. According to legend, when the Israelites received the Ten Commandments and learned about the laws of kashrut, they got rid of their old pots and only ate uncooked dairy foods until they could get new pots. Another thought is that the Torah was given on Shabbat and nothing could be koshered on Shabbat, so the Israelites ate dairy foods.
- Others believe that giving the Torah to the Israelites was like giving newborn babies milk. With that in mind, dairy foods are eaten.
- Another reason why we might eat dairy foods on Shavuot might be explained by a Midrash in which the Israelites were said to have been at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah for so long that their milk soured and turned to cheese.
- The word milk, in Hebrew, is *halav* (חלב). The numerical values of each letter in the word halav equals the number 40, which is the same number of days that Moses spent on Mount Sinai receiving the Torah.
- Some people eat dairy foods with honey, as mentioned in Song 4:11, “Honey and milk are under your tongue.”
- One traditional food is blintzes, crepes filled with sweet cheese and topped with fruit or jam. Mount Sinai in Hebrew is *Har Gavunim*, a derivative of the word *gevinah*, the Hebrew word for cheese.
- Kreplach, or triangular shaped dumplings filled with cheese, are another traditional Shavuot food. The Hebrew Bible (TaNaKh) consists of three parts (the Five Books of Moses, Prophets and Writings). God gave Moses the Torah in the third month. Moses was the third child of his parents. The Jewish people are divided into three groups—Kohen, Levite and Israelite.
- In Temple times during Shavuot, two leavened *challot* baked for Shavuot were often long and had four corners, symbolizing the four methods of interpreting the Torah.
- A seven-layered bread called *siete cielus* (seven heavens) is baked by some Sephardic Jews. This refers to the story of the seven celestial spheres that were opened up when God gave Moses the Torah on Mount Sinai.



- Ukrainian Jews bake challah decorated with a ladder made from *challah* dough to symbolize Moses climbing Mount Sinai. If the ladder has five rungs, it symbolizes the five books of Moses. If it has seven rungs, it is symbolic of the seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot and the seven spheres of Heaven.
- It is said that Greek Jews bake honey and yogurt bread for Shavuot.
- German Jews often bake *kauletsch*, a cheese challah for Shabbat.
- Hungarian and Czech Jews often begin their meals with fruit soups.
- Shavuot is a time to recognize Jewish education and celebrating the choice to participate in Jewish life! In the Middle Ages, it was tradition to introduce 5 year old children to the *alef-bet* and to give them cakes, honey and candies so the “Torah would be sweet on their lips.” At B’nai Israel, as in many congregations, we celebrate Confirmation for our teens on Shavuot, a marker of the end of the formal religious school education of our Talmud Torah.

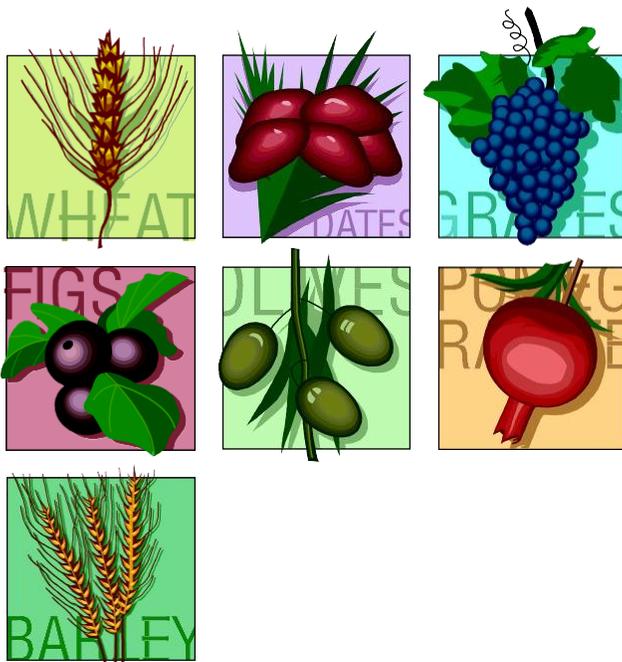
## What can you do?

- Participate in the *Tikkun Leyl Shavuot* at B’nai Israel, or try out your own *Tikkun* at home. Wear your pajamas and spread blankets and pillows on the family room floor! Read stories with a Jewish theme!

Perhaps read the story of Ruth and discuss the values of:

1. *tzedakah* within the story and how you can give *tzedakah* this time of the year...perhaps some spring cleaning could lead to a donation of things from your house to a local charity.
2. loyalty/friendship within the story, as well as any real life situations that are pertinent to those having the discussion
3. kindness/compassion within the story...maybe you could even show kindness by volunteering your time for an organization-helping on site or participating in a walk or a run for a cause that is important to you.

- Decorate your house with flowers and greenery!
- Create an edible “Torah” using pretzels (for the poles/*atzei chayim*) and fruit leather (for the parchment), or carrots (as the poles/*atzei chayim*) and a tortilla (for the parchment), or even peeled small carrots or cucumbers (for the poles/*atzei chayim*) and cheese (as the parchment or to decorate).
- Bake a cake and decorate to look like Mount Sinai or bake muffins or cupcakes to look like Mount Sinai.
- Eat or make ice cream! Or, make your own sundae. Invite some friends over and put out various ice cream toppings and create a sundae bar!
- Eat blintzes!
- Eat cheesecake!
- Eat fruit! Perhaps you could include the seven species of the land of Israel-wheat, barley, grapes, fig, pomegranates, olives and dates (or date honey).
- Remember to take plenty of pictures during Lag BaOmer and before or after Shavuot for your holiday photo album, noting special events, years and guests! Continue to add to your family keepsake!



## Joan Nathan's Chosen Cheese Blintzes

<http://food52.com/recipes/21907-joan-nathan-s-chosen-cheese-blintzes#comments>

Author Notes: For the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, it's traditional to make dairy dishes. Cheese blintzes are a popular favorite. But so often, frozen or processed blintzes have no flavor! So try making these at home. They're perfect for Shavuot, or for any time. (less)

—Joan Nathan

Makes 30 blintzes

### Filling

1 pound farmer cheese (2 cups)  
1/4 cup cream cheese  
1 large egg  
1/4 cup sugar  
dash salt

### Batter

1 cup milk  
1 1/2 cups water  
5 large eggs  
2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour  
6 tablespoons salted butter (for frying)  
dash salt

### Garnish

Sour Cream  
Blueberries, raspberries or strawberries



1. In a medium bowl, mix together thoroughly the ingredients for the filling: farmer cheese, cream cheese, egg, sugar, and salt. Set aside in the refrigerator at least half an hour.
2. Now make the batter: Put 1 1/2 cups of water, 1 cup of milk, and eggs in a blender, and pulse until well mixed. Next, add the flour and salt and mix until all lumps are dissolved. Let the batter rest for half an hour. It does not have to be refrigerated.
3. Heat a non-stick 8-inch skillet or omelet pan over a medium-low heat. When the pan is hot, add about a scant teaspoon of butter or coconut oil to melt. Lift the pan off the heat, and pour about 1/4 of a cup of batter onto the frying pan. Tilt the pan so the batter just covers the bottom. Return the pan to the heat and cook until the crepe blisters, about 1 to 2 minutes. Do not flip. Turn the crepe gently onto waxed or parchment paper, cooked side up. You might need a spatula to help you. Continue cooking the crepes, adding more butter or coconut oil between every 2 to 3 times. Stack the finished blintzes on top of each other.
4. Take one crepe and spread 2 tablespoons of cheese filling along the end closest to you, leaving an inch of space. Fold that inch over the filling, then turn the sides over so they meet in the middle. Roll up the filled end away from you until the blintz is completely closed. Repeat with the remaining filling and crepes.
5. In a large frying pan, melt about a tablespoon of butter or coconut oil a medium heat. Place the filled blintzes in the pan, leaving about an inch of space between them. Fry until golden brown, then flip and repeat. Remove to a paper towel-lined cookie sheet. You will have to do this in batches. Serve immediately with sour cream and fresh berries.
6. NOTE: Blintzes can also be frozen and reheated in a 425-degree oven for about 30 minutes.

## Cold Sour Cherry Soup

<http://forward.com/articles/13450/beyond-blintzes-a-culinary-tour-of-shavuot/>

From Joan Nathan's *Jewish Holiday Cookbook* (Schocken Books)

Serves 6–8

### Ingredients

Two 20-ounce cans or 2 pounds fresh pitted sour cherries  
1 cup sugar, or to taste  
1 cinnamon stick  
1 cup sour cream, plus additional for garnish  
1 cup dry red wine (optional)

1. Drain the canned cherries and pour the juice in a saucepan. Set the cherries aside. Add enough water to the juice to make 3 cups. If using fresh cherries, add 3 cups water. Add the sugar and the cinnamon stick. Bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar, and add the cherries. Partially cover and simmer over low heat for 10-15 minutes.
2. Remove the cinnamon stick. Remove a few cherries (and return them later for texture) and blend the rest in a food processor equipped with a steel blade until smooth.
3. Bring the soup back to a boil. Let it cool a bit and then whisk in the sour cream, letting it dissolve. Add the reserved cherries and chill.
4. Before serving, add the wine, if using. Garnish each bowl with a dollop of sour cream or pass the sour cream at the table.