



AKDAMUS

Akdamus is read on the first day of Shavuos. Composed by Rabbi Meir ben Yitzchak (11th century - Worms, Germany), it consists of 90 verses written in Aramaic. It describes the creation of the world, the world to come, and the angels' praises of G-d, and the greatness and suffering of the Jewish people. The first 44 verses form a double acrostic of the Aleph-Beis, while the first letters of the remaining verses spell the author's name and a blessing. Each verse concludes with את, - the last and first letters of the Hebrew alphabet, to signify that the Torah is endless and as soon as one completes it - you study it again.

MEGILLAS RUTH

It is customary to read the Book of Ruth on the second day of Shavuos. There are a number of reasons why this is so.

1. The story of Ruth describes her great self-sacrifice. A Midianite princess who left her homeland to live as a Jewess in the Land of Israel, She lived her first days in the land in poverty gathering gleanings which had been left in the fields for the poor. This teaches us that in order to attach oneself to Torah, one must be prepared to undergo material self-sacrifice and deprivation. (*Yalkut Shimoni - quoted by Mishna Berurah.*)
2. Just as Ruth overcame all obstacles in order to convert to Judaism, so must every Jew not allow the vicissitudes of life keep him or her from clinging to Torah and Mitzvos.
3. Through her conversion to Judaism, Ruth entered into the covenant with G-d, so too the Jewish nation on Shavuos went through a conversion process and entered into a covenant with God.
4. There are 613 commandments. Before her conversion, Ruth was obligated in 7 Noachide laws. The numerical value of רות is 606, plus the 7 Noachide laws = 613 mitzvos.
5. The final verse records the genealogy of King David and Ruth and Boaz were his great-grandparents. The Talmud Yerushalmi says David died on Shavuos. That is just one more reason why Ruth is read on Shavuos.



FLOWERS

- The custom is to decorate one's home and shul with greenery in honor of Shavuos.
- The reason is to recall Mt. Sinai which was surrounded by greenery as it says in Shemos 34:3 even the flock and cattle may not graze facing the mountain.
- This custom also reminds us that the fruits of the trees begin to ripen and therefore it is a time of heavenly involvement regarding the fruit harvest.

DAIRY FOODS

The custom is to have at least one dairy meal on Shavuos. Some of the reasons for this are as follows:

1. After the Torah was given at Mt. Sinai, the Jewish people came home and the first time were bound by the Torah's dietary laws. They couldn't eat meat right away because they had to prepare a slaughtering knife, remove the forbidden fats, salt the meat, kasher the utensils. Therefore they ate dairy instead. (*Mishna Berurah 444:12*)
2. The Torah is compared to milk and honey. Honey comes from a bee which is not kosher, and milk comes from a cow whose meat is forbidden until it's slaughtered. Both honey and milk allude to the power of Torah which can transform a sullied soul into one of holiness.
3. In Kabbalah, wine and blood symbolize judgement, while water and milk represent mercy. Red is also associated with sin and white with atonement. As it says in Isaiah 1:18: "Though your sins will be like scarlet, they will become white as snow." It is through the purifying process of the Sefirah period that the Jewish people merit divine compassion on Shavuos, symbolized by eating dairy.
4. Moshe Rabbeinu was rescued from the Nile River on the sixth of Sivan - the day of Shavuos. The Talmud tells us how Pharaoh's daughter first brought Moshe to be nursed by Egyptian women, but he wouldn't nurse, for G-d did not want the mouth that would one day talk to him to nurse from a non-Jew. (*Sotah 12:B*). Then Pharaoh's daughter gave over Moshe to Yocheved to be nursed, unaware that Yocheved was Moshe's mother. The eating of Milk products on the sixth of Sivan remembers this miracle.



KINDLING A FIRE

Even though kindling a fire is permitted on Yom Tov for cooking and other Yom Tov needs, it is still forbidden to create a fire that was non-existent beforehand. According to most opinions this violates a Rabbinic prohibition called Molid: Creating a new entity. Therefore, it is only permitted to add fuel to an existing fire or to transfer fire from a pre-existing flame. For example, if one has a candle that is burning, one may hold another candle next to it in order to light it. This is permitted because in this situation a new fire was not created, but just transferred from one place to another. To strike a match on Yom Tov would be forbidden since when a match is struck, a fire is created where there was none before. Similarly, to ignite a match from a place where there is heat but no fire (such as a hot piece of metal) is forbidden because the fire was created from the heat of the metal and not transferred from an existing flame. (An electric coil that is red hot is considered as if it were a fire.)

ELECTRICITY

All opinions agree that turning on any electrical appliance on Yom Tov violates the prohibition of Molid (creating a new entity). Even though there is a current flowing through the wires, it is not considered an actual fire. For this reason, it is forbidden to turn on electric lights on Yom Tov. Even though one may light a candle (from a pre-existing flame) to illuminate a dark room, turning on a light is not allowed because of Molid.

BARBECUE ON YOM TOV

Charcoal may be used on Yom Tov for cooking as long as the fire is transferred from an existing flame. One should remember to open the charcoal bags before Yom Tov to avoid any possible prohibitions. If this was not done, it may still be opened on Yom Tov in a way that destroys the package but does not tear any letters. Lighter fluid may also be poured on the charcoal. If the grill requires assembly, the legs of the stand should be connected to the pan before Yom Tov so as not to violate the prohibition of making a vessel. Once the ashes that are left over from the charcoal cool down, they are muktza and the charcoal grill should not be moved.

GAS GRILL

It is permitted to use a gas grill on Yom Tov. (However, it is very impractical because it is forbidden to turn it off. One may light it by transferring fire from an existing flame. The flint light feature is not allowed to be used