

חג שבועות שמח

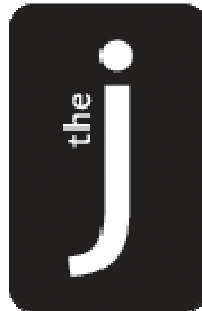
# Chag Shavuot Sameach! Happy Shavuot Holiday!

From all of us at  
The Jewish Community Center

## INSPIRING JEWISH JOURNEYS

For more information about Shavuot or other Jewish holidays and resources contact

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### *Shavuot: The Holiday of First Fruits*

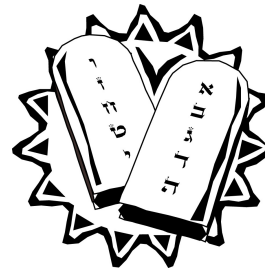
One of the three Pilgrimage festivals, Shavuot is primarily mentioned as an

agricultural holiday in the Torah. It marked the completion of the spring harvest season and was the holiday when Israelites would bring their first fruits to the Temple in Jerusalem thanking God for a successful harvest season. Tradition taught that these first fruit were to come from the seven species native to the land of Israel, although often the Jewish people would embellish and bring other crops as well. The high priest would make a special sacrifice to God on behalf of the entire people as a celebration of the food which human beings in partnership with God had been fortunate to enjoy.



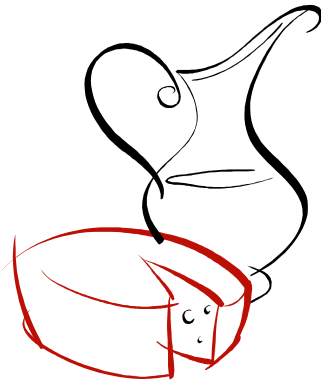
Later on in Jewish history, Shavuot became associated with the anniversary of God's revelation to Moses and the Jewish people on Mt. Sinai. It was during this revelation that Moses received from God the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed. Tradition also teaches that God imparted all of the laws and ethical teachings contained in the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Because of the association between Shavuot and the giving of the Torah, this is a time when many synagogues and temples hold special confirmation ceremonies marking the graduation of student from Hebrew high school or several years of other post-bar and bat-mitzvah study.



## *Eating Dairy*

One tradition on Shavuot is the eating of specifically dairy meals. One reason given is that it reminds us of a verse from Song of Songs, "Honey and milk are under your tongue" which is believed to be describing the Torah. Another explanation is that when Moses received the law on Mt. Sinai it included the dietary laws. Before the Israelites could eat meat they had several preparations to do according to those new dietary laws. Therefore, their first meal after revelation must have been dairy. In commemoration of that, we too eat dairy on Shavuot.



## *The Book of Ruth*



During worship services on Shavuot, it is tradition to read the biblical Book of Ruth. This story is about a woman's conversion to Judaism. It is read on Shavuot because it is set at harvest time and also because Ruth's voluntary conversion to Judaism is often compared to the Israelites' voluntary acceptance of the Torah and God's covenant at Mt. Sinai.

## *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*

Another custom, began by Jewish mystics in 16th century Safed, is to stay up all night learning Torah. Communities gather together either in Synagogues or in their homes and study all night long. By studying the Torah, Jews show their reverence and joy of receiving the Torah in the first place, one of the key concepts of Shavuot.

## *Family Activities*



## *Feeding the Hungry*

One way to celebrate Shavuot which connects the concepts of thanking God for the spring harvest and the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai is by donating food to the hungry. Donate food to the Jewish Food Pantry or spend a few hours as a family volunteering at the Jewish Food Pantry.

## *Bake Dairy Treats*

Children often enjoy helping to prepare food or bake cookies. Take the opportunity as a family to make a cheesecake or other special dairy dessert and use the moment to teach your children about why the custom of eating dairy on Shavuot has developed.

## *Plant a Garden or Visit a Farm*

Shavuot is a time when we pause to think about where our food comes from and how fortunate we are to have such wonderful produce that grows in the earth. One way to teach this to our children is to plant a garden. Find a sunny patch of your yard and plant different varieties of herbs, fruits, and vegetables. If you don't have a green thumb, then take a family trip to a local farm.

