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THE HARVEST SERIES:
SUKKOT AND SHAVUOT RITUAL GUIDES

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Introduction

Sukkot and Shavuot have gotten the short end of the stick out of the three harvest festivals, with Passover currently wearing the crown. So, what is it about Passover that makes it so well loved? It comes with an easy-to-follow guide on how to observe the holiday! The Haggadah contains everything you need to know about to run a seder, from what food to eat to what blessings to say. Taking that brilliant rabbinic pedagogical tool to heart, Harvest has done something similar for Sukkot and Shavuot. No, this isn't about hosting another seder. Instead, this is a series of guides to help you reconnect with the origins and symbolism of the harvest festivals as you celebrate them at home in your own way.

These festivals have become minor in liberal communities for many reasons. Either we no longer believe the basis of the holidays, we don't understand what it is we're supposed to be celebrating, or we don't want to be caught up in the complicated rules of how to observe. For many contemporary Jews who lack deeply held theologies and feel disconnected from Rabbinic laws of old, nature, art, justice, food, and learning are prime vehicles for spiritual connection and exploration. Many of us are concerned about the earth and simultaneously feel a dwindling connection to it. We are concerned with the betterment of self. We love food and gathering with loved ones.

These guides include everything you need to know to understand the basics of the holidays: a little history, some Jewish text, and the basic liturgy. And they also offer creative alternatives to observe and explore the Jewish harvest festivals in your own way on your own timeline. They tell you how to build a sukkah, but they also offer the opportunity to take a camping trip instead. Sure, you can buy a classic lulav and etrog. Or you can make your own with the plants you see growing around you. All night text study on Shavuot your thing?

Great, read the book of Ruth! Want something a little more hands on? Learn how to build a symbolic floral wreath instead.

HARVEST is the epitome of the Reform idea of “informed choice”. Read the background information about the holiday and then choose what observances make sense for you or your family. A “choose your own adventure holiday” if you will. Enjoy!



HARVEST

An Invitation to
Celebrate Sukkot
Your Way

by Jessica Jacobs



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A LITTLE BIT OF BACKGROUND


Built on the idea that Jewish holidays should be accessible, meaningful, relatable, and impactful, this guide serves as a “create your own adventure” map to the holiday of Sukkot. It includes classic information about the holiday and its history, rituals, prayers, and Jewish texts, as well as new suggestions for innovative and creative Sukkot celebrations. From building a sukkah (or another structure), to creating a holiday feast, to applying the themes of Sukkot to your justice work, this guide hopes to create a holistic menu for a DIY Sukkot experience.

Grab some friends or family (children are welcome!) and discover what this guide has to offer. This guide is not an all or nothing experience. It’s up to you to take our suggested rituals and practices and add them to your existing Sukkot observance or create a new observance altogether.

Sukkot is an underrated holiday, often overlooked because people don’t have room for a sukkah or don’t want to eat dinner in the cold and rain. We’re not letting the weather stop us. Instead we’ve provided alternative tweaks and possibilities for every step of the holiday so that you can observe Sukkot your way. Whether art, food, justice, or learning is your thing, we have you covered. You can even sit down around your holiday table (or picnic cloth) and read this guide with a group of friends, cover to cover, like you would with the Passover haggadah.

This guide is part of a series to be used on Sukkot and Shavuot, in conjunction with your preferred Passover haggadah, to help weave together the three harvest festivals in theme and observance. Passover gets all the street cred, but its sibling holidays are just as exciting and have the potential to add depth and meaning to the Jewish calendar year.

Take a look inside and enjoy your holiday celebrations!



A note about God language: Throughout this guide you'll notice examples of God language that looks familiar, like Adonai and Melekh, and you'll notice language that may be new, like feminine gendered blessings and Source. You're invited to lean in and try out these alternative blessings to see how they supplement your theology or impact your understanding of the themes of the holiday.

CHAG SAMEACH HAPPY HOLIDAY

DID YOU KNOW?

The number 4 is a motif that is present in many aspects of Sukkot. The holiday has 4 names and incorporates 4 species of the land of Israel into ritual practice. As a harvest festival, the holiday also calls upon the number 4 as it's found in nature, like through the 4 seasons, 4 winds, and 4 directions. Because of this special motif, this guide has 4 sections to it!




WHAT IS SUKKOT?

Sukkot is the first of the three Harvest festivals in the Jewish calendar, before Passover and Shavuot in the spring. Sukkot, like its fellow harvest festivals, comes from agricultural origins but was transformed and given new meaning after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the end of the sacrificial cult. Sukkot is a 7 (or 8, depending on your custom) day festival that takes place in the fall and begins on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei.

Sukkot has four names, each of which originates from a different place in the Bible and illuminates a different aspect of the festival. The most used name is Sukkot, literally meaning "booths/huts", and refers to the temporary dwellings that the Israelites lived in while wandering in the desert

On the first day you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before Adonai your God seven days. You shall observe it as a festival of Adonai for seven days in the year; you shall observe it in the seventh month as a law for all time, throughout the ages. You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I Adonai your God. So Moses declared to the Israelites the set times of Adonai. (Leviticus 23:40-44)



Zeman Simchateinu, meaning The Time of Our Rejoicing, comes from the Biblical commandment that we should “rejoice before Adonai your God seven days” (Exodus 23:40) during Sukkot. Many people take this to mean that we should attempt to find continual joy throughout the holiday, in our celebrations, rituals, and communities. This joy seems to stand in contrast to the impermanence of the Sukkah structure, inviting us to consider how joy could stem from people or tradition, as opposed to material goods.

Chag Ha'asif, The Festival of Ingathering, comes from Exodus 23:16: “You shall celebrate the festival of ingathering, at the end of the year, when you gather in your labors out of the field.” Although we are taught that the huts we recreate on Sukkot stem from the structures the Israelites built while wandering in the desert, they may actually come from an agricultural practice where farmers and laborers built temporary structures to sleep by their crops during the harvest season.

In I Kings, II Chronicles, and Ezekiel, Sukkot is simply referred to as *HaChag*, or THE Festival. This tradition is carried on by the early rabbis of the Mishnah (first two centuries CE) as they discuss holiday law. So why is Sukkot THE festival? It was the day of the consecration of the First Temple by King Solomon and an occasion for public Torah reading every 7 years.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sometimes you'll hear Sukkot pronounced and written as Sukkos. The biblical TH sound became S in Eastern European Jewish communities, while it became a T sound in Sephardic communities in modern Hebrew.



A Little Bit of Celebration



THE SUKKAH

Want to build a traditional sukkah? Here are the basics:

- It should be a freestanding structure with 3-4 walls built under the open sky
- It should be sturdy enough to survive regular weather
- It should be large enough to fit one person inside but no taller than 30 feet
- It must have a roof covering, called schach, made of natural materials
- The skhach needs to be sparse enough to see the stars at night but dense enough so less light shines through the roof than shadow

The structure of the sukkah is the cornerstone of Sukkot ritual practice. It is the dwelling for which the holiday is named, and therefore central to fulfilling the commandments of the holiday. For those who can and want to build a sukkah, we'll provide some basic guidelines for how to get started. But what if we don't have the space or ability to build a sukkah? How then can we opt into Sukkot in a meaningful way? To honor the reality that not everyone can or wants to build a sukkah, we will explore alternative ways to opt into making meaning out of the holiday of sukkot, whether through enjoying the bounty of nature, sharing meals with loved ones, or expressing gratitude for the permanent structures that exist in our everyday lives.


Want to build an alternative sukkah? Here are some options:

Go camping! Have a tent? Take it into nature and truly lean into dining under the stars each night. Or you can set up a tent in your backyard or in your home. A tent, or even a DIY fort, is a great way to access the feeling of impermanence that a traditional sukkah is supposed to elicit.

Go for a picnic! Grab friends or family and set up a picnic at a new or favorite local nature spot. Sukkot is all about gratitude for the fall harvest, so take the opportunity to enjoy the bounty of nature where you live. Challenge each person to bring a food that speaks to their understanding of the holiday, whether inspired by the fall harvest, gratitude, impermanence, or joy.

Visit a pumpkin patch or an apple farm! Want to really lean into the harvest theme? Go harvest fresh fall fruits and vegetables to decorate your home. Turn your personal harvest into a special sukkot meal in gratitude for the bounty of the earth.

Volunteer or donate! Dwelling in the sukkah reminds us of the impermanence of the Israelites wandering in the desert, but it also reminds us that there are many who live without homes in our world. Take this opportunity to volunteer at a homeless shelter, donate to housing causes, or research local efforts to build sustainable housing for the unhoused, like tiny homes or eco villages.



DID YOU KNOW? You can build a mini model sukkah out of your favorite materials at home. Use legos, popsicle sticks, or cardboard boxes to build and decorate your dream sukkah. This is your opportunity to get creative. Use markers, paint, glitter, or collage to add festive flair.

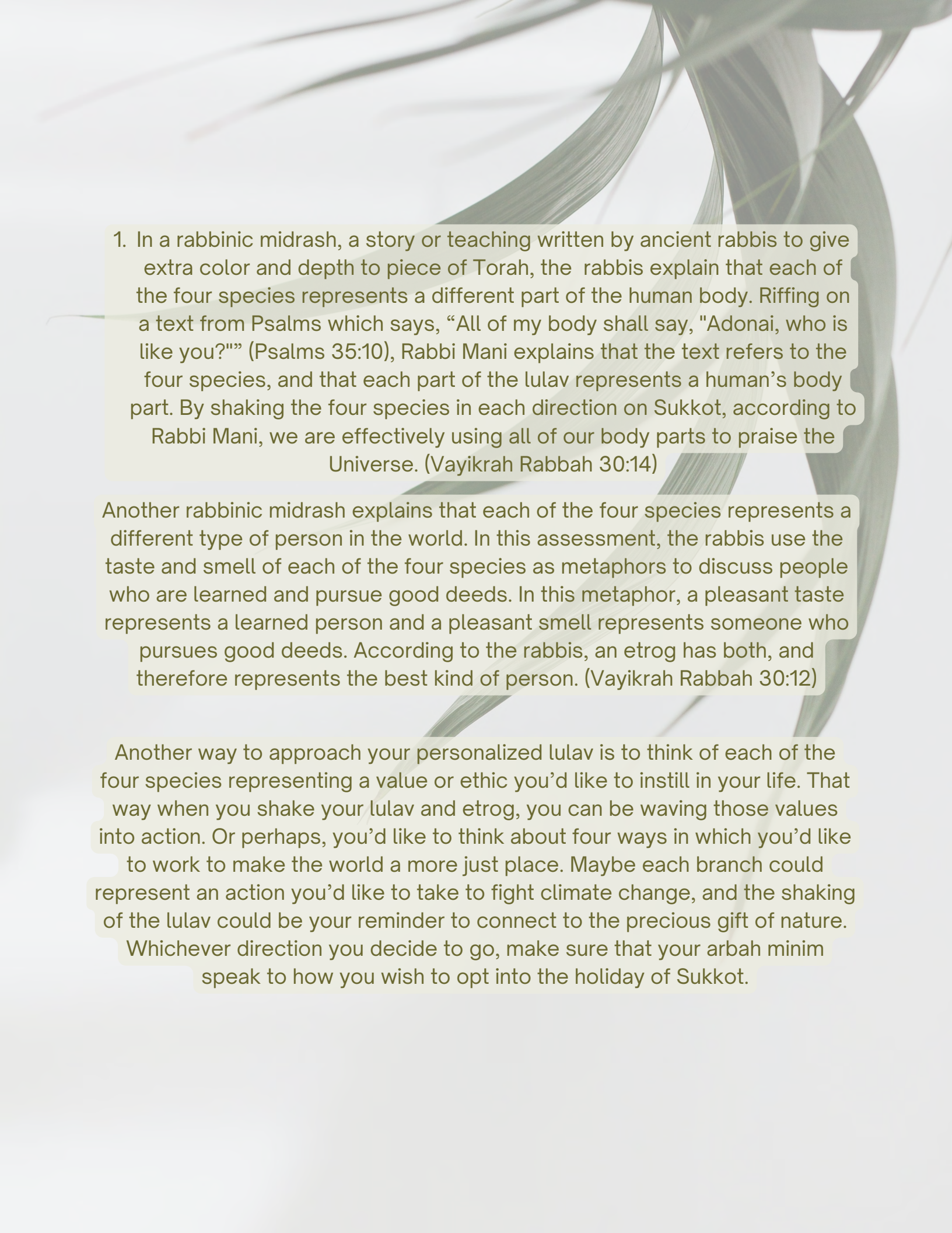
Lulav and Etrog

The *Arbah Minim*, or 4 species, are at the center of the Sukkot celebration. They are made up of: lulav (date palm), aravah (willow), hadas (myrtle), and etrog (citron). On Sukkot we bundle the 4 species and shake them in the sukkah while reciting a prayer. This ritual likely comes from pagan times, as the sound of the leaves shaking elicits a noise similar to a rain stick. This ritual functions as both a moment of gratitude for the fall harvest and a supplication for rain.

These 4 species are native to the biblical land of Israel, but that doesn't mean they're native to where you live today. You can buy a lulav and etrog at a Jewish market or online, but we love the idea of making one yourself with local flora to represent the nature you encounter every day. By collecting and creating your own lulav and etrog, you opt into spending meaningful time encountering the physical world around you, and have the opportunity to think creatively about your personal intentions for Sukkot. Just make sure to bind your four species so they are easy to shake, and store them in a vase or the fridge for safe keeping during the week of the holiday.

There are many ways to think about approaching your personalized lulav and etrog. You can attempt to recreate the classic lulav and etrog in appearance or you can utilize various rabbinic themes and teachings as guidelines for the branches and fruits that you choose. Utilizing the table on the next page, think critically about how you can recreate the meaning behind the lulav and etrog with more familiar plants, fruits, or veggies in your ecosystem.

Ritual Fact: A lulav is considered *tashmishei mitzvah*, or a ritual implement. That means that it isn't considered holy in and of itself, but rather takes on an attribute of holiness when it's used. That means that foraging your lulav and etrog can be part of the process of turning the mundane you see around you into a holy thing!



1. In a rabbinic midrash, a story or teaching written by ancient rabbis to give extra color and depth to piece of Torah, the rabbis explain that each of the four species represents a different part of the human body. Riffing on a text from Psalms which says, "All of my body shall say, "Adonai, who is like you?" (Psalms 35:10), Rabbi Mani explains that the text refers to the four species, and that each part of the lulav represents a human's body part. By shaking the four species in each direction on Sukkot, according to Rabbi Mani, we are effectively using all of our body parts to praise the Universe. (Vayikrah Rabbah 30:14)

Another rabbinic midrash explains that each of the four species represents a different type of person in the world. In this assessment, the rabbis use the taste and smell of each of the four species as metaphors to discuss people who are learned and pursue good deeds. In this metaphor, a pleasant taste represents a learned person and a pleasant smell represents someone who pursues good deeds. According to the rabbis, an etrog has both, and therefore represents the best kind of person. (Vayikrah Rabbah 30:12)

Another way to approach your personalized lulav is to think of each of the four species representing a value or ethic you'd like to instill in your life. That way when you shake your lulav and etrog, you can be waving those values into action. Or perhaps, you'd like to think about four ways in which you'd like to work to make the world a more just place. Maybe each branch could represent an action you'd like to take to fight climate change, and the shaking of the lulav could be your reminder to connect to the precious gift of nature.

Whichever direction you decide to go, make sure that your arbah minim speak to how you wish to opt into the holiday of Sukkot.

The Traditional Arbah Minim

Date Palm**Hebrew Name:** *Lulav***Body Part:** Spine**Value:** Taste but no smell, learned but doesn't do good deeds**Willow****Hebrew Name:** *Arava***Body Part:** Lips**Value:** No smell or taste, not learned and doesn't do good deeds**Myrtle****Hebrew Name:** *Hadas***Body Part:** Eyes**Value:** Smell but no taste, does good deeds but not learned**Citron****Hebrew Name:** *Etrog***Body Part:** Heart**Value:** Smell and Taste, learned and does good deeds

Your Personal Arbah Minim

Name:**Symbolism:****Name:****Symbolism:****Name:****Symbolism:****Name:****Symbolism:**

Ritual and Blessings

Traditionally, we wave the lulav and etrog each weekday morning of Sukkot in the Sukkah. Feel free to wave yours in your Sukkah, in your yard, or on your daily walk. Like most Jewish rituals, we recite the blessing and then do the action. Before you recite the blessing, hold the lulav and etrog in your hand. Hold your etrog or etrog equivalent upside down and in your left hand while you recite. Your lulav or equivalent is held in the right hand. The blessing is:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת לולָב
*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Ruach ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu al netilat lulav.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Breath of the Universe, who has sanctified us with commandments and has commanded us concerning the taking of the lulav.

On the first day of waving the lulav and etrog, we add the Shehecheyanu blessing, which is recited to mark special times and first occasions.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהֵחֵיָנוּ וְקִיַּמָּנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה
*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Ruach ha'olam shehehiyanu v'kiyemanu v'higiyanu
lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Breath of the Universe, who has granted us life, sustenance, and permitted us to reach this season.

Once you've recited the blessing, you flip your etrog rightside up and basically perform a rain dance with your lulav and etrog. Shake your lulav and etrog in every direction three times: forward, right, back, left, up and down. Shake shake, shake shake, a-shake it!

DID YOU KNOW?

Hebrew words in other Jewish languages sometimes take new forms. In Arabic, a small lulav is called a lwilab. Whether your lulav is big or small, stand tall, and shake it all!

USE THIS PAGE TO
INCLUDE PHOTOS
AND STORIES OF THE
USHPIZIN YOU INVITE
INTO YOUR SUKKAH
YEAR AFTER YEAR.
YOU CAN ALSO HANG
THEIR PHOTOS AND
STORIES ON THE
WALLS OR FRAME
THEM AND KEEP
THEM ON YOUR
DINNER TABLE.

EXALTED, SACRED, HONORED

Ushpizin

Ushpizin means
"honored guests".
They are people we
invite into the
sukkah, our
temporary dwelling,
to share in the
joyous occasion of
Sukkot.

Historically, inviting ushpizin into
the sukkah has been an
opportunity to tell the stories of
our ancestors. However, we
now have the opportunity to
invite and center the stories of
others within our Sukkot. Is
there a particular justice leader
or role model whose story you
want to center? How does the
impermanence of the sukkah
structure inform your
understanding of who we
should be inviting into our
homes and communities?

DID YOU KNOW?

There are a lot of
people in the world who
don't have permanent
homes and who may
have to sleep outdoors
every night. What's
something you're
grateful to have in your
home that you think all
people deserve to have?

As you invite your
guests, greet them
with a message. What
can you say to make
them feel welcomed?

You have the opportunity to
invite your own honored
guests into your sukkah. Who
do you want to invite? They
can be real or imaginary, alive
or dead, past or present. What
values do each of your guests
bring into your sukkah?

Leading mystical Rabbi
Isaac Luria reportedly
used to welcome his
Ushpizin by saying,
"Enter, exalted, sacred
guests! Enter, exalted,
sacred ancestors! Be
seated, exalted guests!
Be seated, faithful
guests!"

Many people invite the
matriarchs or
patriarchs as ushpizin
into the sukkah. Each
forefather or
foremother
represented a
different value in the
sukkah.

W E L C O M E
H O N O R E D
G U E S T S



SUKKOT RECIPES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Sukkot is an incredible time to don your chef's hat and bring the farm to your table. Due to the festival harvest, Sukkot is traditionally a time to utilize seasonal fruits and vegetables in meal preparations. And historically, because of the need to shlep food in and out of the sukkah, many traditional Jewish Sukkot meals are made in easy to carry forms like casseroles. Ashkenazi, Sephardic, and Mizrahi traditions each contain their own version of a stuffed food as well, like stuffed grape leaves or filled pastries, to symbolize the overflowing abundance of the harvest.

Many American Jews utilize classic Thanksgiving recipes on Sukkot, due to the overlap in season and theme. We've included some fun Sukkot recipes here for you to try, and encourage you to develop some of your own as well.

A Sephardic Sukkot Dinner Menu

from *The Sephardic Kitchen* by Rabbi Robert Sternberg



Holiday Bread

~

Buleymas with Savory Meat Filling

Yaprakes de Oja (Stuffed Vine Leaves)

Ajada de Aves (Turkish-Style bean Dip) with Fresh
Vegetables

Assorted Meat-Stuffed Vegetables

Autumn Quince *Composto*

~

Travados, Dulce de Mansana (Jellied Apple Confection),
and *Mustachudos* (Sephardic Hazelnut Cookies)
Coffee

Mustachudos: Sephardic Hazelnut Cookies

from *The Sephardic Kitchen* by Rabbi Robert Sternberg

These cookies are a specialty of the Jewish community of Rhodes. *Mustachudos* are similar to macaroons but they contain egg yolks as well as egg whites. Unlike macaroons, they do not harden after they have cooled but remain quite soft. They are delicate in flavor and a little tricky to get right the first time but with a little practice, you, too, can make delicious mustachudos.

PREPARATION TIME: 40-50 minutes

YIELD: makes 25-30 cookies

- 3 cups whole, shelled hazelnuts
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon finely grated fresh orange zest
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 large eggs, well beaten
- 1 tablespoon honey (preferably citrus flower honey)
- Confectioners' sugar

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Cover two cookie sheets with wax paper.

2. Place the hazelnuts and the sugar in a food processor or blender.

Pulse/chop until the mixture is ground into a paste. Pour it into a mixing bowl.

3. Add the remaining ingredients except the confectioners' sugar and mix together well. The mixture should form a stiff paste.

4. Drop teaspoonsful of the nut batter onto the wax paper, leaving a 2-inch space between each cookie.

5. Bake 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Remove the cookies from the oven and cool completely before attempting to remove them from the paper. Separate slowly and carefully. Sprinkle the cookies with confectioners' sugar before serving. Stored in tightly closed tins, the cookies keep well for weeks.

An Ashkenazi Inspired American Sukkot Dinner Menu

from *At Oma's Table* by Doris Schechter



Eggs with Sauteed Onions
Black Bread
Chopped Salad

~
Roast Turkey with Apple, Almond, and Raisin Stuffing
Cranberry-Fig Chutney
Barley Pilaf with Shikate Mushrooms and Onions

Tzimmes
Peas and Carrots with White Sauce
Corn Bread

~
Harvest "Cake"
Coffee

Harvest "Cake"

from *At Oma's Table* by Doris Schechter

MAKES 1 12 BY 7½-INCH CAKE

Make the dough. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and sugar on medium speed until fluffy. Beat in the egg, egg yolks, orange juice, and lemon zest until incorporated.

In a bowl, whisk together the flour and baking powder. Reduce the speed to low and add the flour mixture, one cup at a time, beating until a ball of dough forms around the paddle. Gather the dough into a ball, divide it into 2 equal pieces, and pat each into a flat disk. Wrap each piece in plastic wrap and chill in the refrigerator for up to 4 hours (but at least 2 hours), or until firm.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

On a lightly floured surface, roll one piece of the dough into a rectangle to fit a 12 x 7½-inch baking pan, with a slight overhang. Roll the dough over the rolling pin, center it over the pan, and line the bottom and sides, pressing the dough gently into the corners. Brush the bottom and sides of the dough with a layer of apricot preserves.

Make the filling. In a large bowl, combine all the filling ingredients stirring well. Spread the filling in an even layer over the dough in the pan.

Lightly re-flour the work surface and roll the remaining piece of dough into a rectangle to cover the pan. Center the dough over the filling. Trim the overhanging dough with edge of the pan, then crimp the sides decoratively all the way around to seal. Brush the top of the dough with the beaten egg white and sprinkle with sugar. Prick the top of the crust all over with the tines of a fork.

Place the pan on a baking sheet and bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour, or until the pastry is golden in color.

Transfer the pan to a wire rack and let cool completely before serving.

FOR THE DOUGH

- 10 tablespoons (1¼ sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 extra-large egg
- 3 extra-large egg yolks
- ½ cup orange juice
- Grated zest of 1 lemon
- 3¼ cups all-purpose flour, plus additional, for rolling
- 2½ teaspoons baking powder
- Apricot preserves, for brushing the dough

FOR THE FILLING

- 3 cups peeled, cored, and chopped McIntosh apples (4 medium)
- 1 cup chopped blanched almonds, or other nut of choice
- ½ cup chopped dried dates
- ½ cup chopped dried figs
- ¼ cup sugar
- Grated zest of 2 lemons (2 tablespoons)
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 extra-large egg white, beaten lightly, for egg wash
- 2 tablespoons sugar, for sprinkling on the crust



A Little Bit of Blessing



TABLE BLESSINGS

To mark many Jewish holidays, we begin with a set of rituals, just like we do on Shabbat. On the first night of Sukkot, it is customary to bring in the holiday with candles, wine, hand washing, and challah. Here, we've included these blessings as well as special blessing for dwelling in the Sukkah and the Shehecheyanu to mark special times and first occasions. Usually these blessings are said on the first night (or first two nights, depending on your custom) of the holiday, but we encourage you to say them whenever you partake in your special holiday meal, whether it's the first night or the last.

To Bless the Festival Candles

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל
[שַׁבָּת וְשֶׁל] יוֹם טוֹב

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh
ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel
(shabbat v'shel) yom tov*

Barukh Atah Adonai, Sovereign of
time and space, who has provided us
with a path to holiness through the
observance of mitzvot and has
instructed us to kindle the (Shabbat
and) festival lights.

To Bless the Fruit of the Vine

On Shabbat, begin here:

בלחש: וְיִהי עֶרֶב וְיִהי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי

וַיְכֻלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צִבְאָם. וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה,
וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ
אֹתוֹ, כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת

On Shabbat, begin here:

Quietly: And there was evening and
there was morning, the sixth day.

The heavens and the earth, and
all they contain, were completed.
On the seventh day God finished
the work, ceasing from all work
on the seventh day. Then God
blessed the seventh day, making
it holy - for on it, God ceased
from all the work of creation.
Genesis 1:31-23

On all other days, begin here:

On Shabbat, begin here:

Quietly: Vay'hi erev vay'hi voker yom
hashishi.

Vay'chulu hashamayim
v'haaretz v'chol tz'vaam.
Vay'chal Elohim bayom hash'vi-i
m'lachto asher asah. Vayishbot
bayom hash'vi-i mikol m'lachto
asher asah. Vay'varech Elohim
et yom hash'vi-i vay'kadeish
oto,ki vo shavat mikol m'lachto
asher bara Elohim laasot.

סְבִירֵי חֲבֵרֵי

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

On all other days, begin here:

With the assent of my friends

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God,
Sovereign of time and space, who
creates the fruit of the vine.

On all other days, begin here:

Savri chaverai/chaverotai

Barukh Atah Adonai eloheinu
melekh ha-olam, borei pri ha-
gafen.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל עַם וְרוֹמַמְנוּ מִכָּל לָשׁוֹן
וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו. וַתֵּתֶן לָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה (לשבת שבתות למנוחה ו) מוֹעֲדִים
לְשִׂמְחָה, חַגִּים וְזִמְנִים לְשִׂשׁוֹן, אֶת יוֹם (הַשַּׁבָּת הַזֶּה וְאֶת יוֹם) חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת הַזֶּה, זְמַן
שִׂמְחָתָנוּ (בְּאַהֲבָה) מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ זֵכֶר לִיְצִיאַת מִצְרָיִם. כִּי בָנוּ בְּחֵרָתְךָ וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתְךָ
מִכָּל הָעַמִּים. (וְשַׁבָּת) וּמוֹעֲדֵי קֹדֶשְׁךָ (בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן) בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְשִׂשׁוֹן הִנַּחֲלָתָנוּ

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מְקַדֵּשׁ (הַשַּׁבָּת ו) יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַזְמָנִים

Blessed are You, Adonai, our
God, sovereign of time and
space, who has chosen and
distinguished us by providing us a
path to holiness through the
observance of mitzvot. Lovingly,
Adonai our God, You have
bestowed on us (Shabbatot for
rest,) festivals for rejoicing and
holidays and seasons for delight:
this (Shabbat and this, day of) the
Festival of Sukkot, season of our
rejoicing, (with love,) a sacred
time, a symbol of the exodus
from Egypt. You have chosen us
and sanctified us among all
people, bestowing on us Shabbat
and] Your hallowed festivals
(Lovingly and gladly,) for joy and
delight.

Blessed are You Adonai, who
makes (Shabbat,) the people
Israel, and the festivals holy.

Barukh Atah Adonai eloheinu
melekh ha-olam, asher bahar
banu mikol am v'rom'manu
mikol lashon, v'kid'shanu
b'mitzvotav. Va-titten lanu
Adonai eloheinu b'ahavah
(shabbatot limnuhah u-) mo-
adim l'simhah, hagim u-z'manim
l'sason, (et yom ha-shabbat ha-
zeh vet yom) hag ha-sukkot ha-
zeh, z'man simhateinu,
(b'ahavah) mikra kodesh,
zeikher litziat mitzrayim. Ki vanu
vaharta v'otanu kidashta mikol
ha-amim, (v'shabbat) u-mo-adei
kodshekha (b'ahavah u-
v'ratzon) b'simhah u-v'sason
hinhaltanu.

Barukh Atah Adonai, m'kadesh
(ha-shabbat V') yisrael
v'hazmanim.

To Dwell in the Sukkah, wherever or whatever that may look like for you

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ צוּר הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לֵישֵׁב בַּסֻּכָּה

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu, Tzur
haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu leisheiv basukkah.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God,
Rock of the Universe, who hallows us
with mitzvot, commanding us to
dwell in the sukkah

To Mark Time

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ צוּר הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהֵחֵינּוּ וְקִיַּמָּנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Tzur
ha'olam sheheheyanu v'kiyemanu
v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God,
Rock of the Universe, who has
granted us life, sustenance, and
permitted us to reach this season

To Wash Hands

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְקוֹר הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם

*Barukh Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Mekor
ha-olam, asher kid 'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God,
Source of the Universe, who hallows
us with mitzvot, and has instructed
us to wash our hands

To Break Bread

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְקוֹר הָעוֹלָם
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

*Barukh Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Mekor
ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min haaretz*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God,
Source of the Universe, who brings
forth bread from the earth

Hallel is a service that is added to prayer to elevate and infuse joy into special times, like the harvest festivals, Hanukkah, and the New Month. Sukkot is one of those special times! In its entirety, Hallel is a recitation of Psalms 113-118, each of which expresses praise for the Sacred Powers of the Universe. Here is a poem that expresses similar immense joy and gratitude for the wonders of this world.

118 by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

*let gratitude well up like water
lovingkindness is forever
let my community call forth
lovingkindness is forever
let all who marry fear and awe call forth
lovingkindness is forever*

*from the straits of depression I have called out
You answer me with heart wide as the fields*

*open Your gates for me
I yearn to enter and give thanks*

*help me know that what was rejected in me
is cornerstone for something new*

*this day, right here, was shaped by You
I want to rejoice in it*

*Dear One, bring us salvation
bring us Your help*

*You give us light; in return we imagine
festival processions, our arms full of branches*

*bless all who come in Your name
lovingkindness is forever*

HALLEL

Joyous Song

02 : 15

- 01 : 20



DID YOU KNOW?

Hallel is woven into the Passover seder, so you may have recited it without even knowing it was there!



YIZKOR

Yizkor is a special memorial service conducted on Yom Kippur and the last days of each of the harvest festivals: Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot. Yizkor was originally instituted in the Middle Ages to honor those killed in the Crusades. Over time, Yizkor has become central in how many people observe these holidays. Some people have superstitions around attending a Yizkor service if their parents are still alive. Yizkor can be said alone or in a small group.

For many people, holidays can bring up memories, either of people you celebrated with, people who brought you joy, or people with whom you had complicated relationships. We recognize that birth and death are part of the natural cycles of life, just as we recognize the cyclical ebb and flow of mother nature. If you have someone you're holding in your heart, take some time this Sukkot to remember them in a way that they would appreciate.

And if you feel so moved, you can recite the Yizkor blessing:

May God remember the soul of _____ who has gone to *his/her/their* eternal home.

For the sake of repairing the world, I freely give tzedakah in *his/her/their* memory.

For the sake of *his/her/their* precious soul, let my memories, my prayers, and my acts of goodness bind *him/her/them* to the bond of life.

May I bring honor to *his/her/their* memory by word and deed.

May *he/she/they* be at one with the One who is life eternal; and may the beauty of *his/her/their* life shine forevermore.



This is a contemporary poem written about the experience of preparing for the Jewish fall holidays.

The Light has Changed

by Barbara Kavadias

All of a sudden, there is a new quality to the light
An angle, refractive
A goldenness
A sense of richness, fullness
People say, "The holidays are early"
But the light of the sun
Says otherwise
It says fall is coming
Even though it is early September
Even though the leaves are green
The Holy Days are right on time
Two weeks later
The full moon reflects the message
Not just any full moon
Sukkot is heralded with the Harvest moon
Its fullness shines on us
Seemingly longer than other full moons
Just days before
The fall equinox
As modern people

With our atomic clocks
Phones and connected watches
We have calendars
Paper and electronic
The sun and the moon
In dialogue with each other
Endlessly churn out their own schedule
Reflected in our ancient
Understanding of time that
Somehow is more relevant
Than our current
Devices and measurements
They speak to us
With light and warmth
Food and smells
Community coming together
In that ancient re-enactment
Of creation and the cycle of life
That is always on time



Want to learn more about Sukkot?

Check out these additional resources

**Chutzpod podcast on
Backyard Lulav-ing**

[CLICK HERE](#)

**Judaism Unbound podcast
on Sukkot**

[CLICK HERE](#)

**Custom and Craft Sukkot
Booklets**

[CLICK HERE](#)

**Days United Sukkot in a
Box**

[CLICK HERE](#)

**BimBam: The Lego Sukkot
Movie**

[CLICK HERE](#)

18Doors Sukkot Recipes

[CLICK HERE](#)



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HARVEST

An Invitation to
Celebrate Shavuot
Your Way

by Jessica Jacobs





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A LITTLE BIT OF BACKGROUND

Built on the idea that Jewish holidays should be accessible, meaningful, relatable, and impactful, HARVEST serves as a “create your own adventure” map to the holiday of Shavuot. It includes classic information about the holiday and its history, rituals, prayers, and Jewish texts, as well as new suggestions for innovative and creative Shavuot celebrations. From studying Torah all night, to creating a holiday feast, and helping you get in touch with the nature around you, this guide hopes to create a holistic menu for a DIY Shavuot experience. Grab some friends or family (children are welcome!) and discover what this guide has to offer. This guide is not an all or nothing experience. It’s up to you to take our suggested rituals and practices and add them to your existing Shavuot observance or create a new observance altogether.

Shavuot is an underrated holiday, often overlooked because it has historically required a particular set of theological beliefs or the desire to stay up and study Torah all night. Besides, the food of choice for Shavuot is dairy, and let’s face it, we don’t have enough Lactaid pills to eat cheesecake all night. But we’re not letting our lactose intolerance stop us. Instead we’ve provided alternative tweaks and possibilities for every step of the holiday so that you can observe Shavuot your way. Whether art, food, justice, or learning is your thing, we have you covered. You can even sit down around your holiday table (or picnic cloth) and read this guide with a group of friends, cover to cover, like you would with the Passover haggadah.

This guide is part of a series to be used on Sukkot and Shavuot, in conjunction with your preferred Passover haggadah, to help weave together the three harvest festivals in theme and observance. Passover gets all the street cred, but its sibling holidays are just as exciting and have the potential to add depth and meaning to the Jewish calendar year.

Take a look inside and enjoy your holiday celebrations!



A note about God language: Throughout this guide you'll notice examples of God language that looks familiar, like Adonai and Melekh, and you'll notice language that may be new, like feminine gendered blessings and Source. You're invited to lean in and try out these alternative blessings to see how they supplement your theology or impact your understanding of the themes of the holiday.

CHAG SAMEACH HAPPY HOLIDAY

DID YOU KNOW?

Other names for Shavuot from historic Jewish communities around the world include:

- Pentecost - Judaic Hellenistic name meaning 50th, because the festival is 50 days after Passover
- Feast of Visitation - Babylonian name that draws upon the tradition to visit graves of loved ones on the festival
- Feast of Roses - Italian name that draws upon the tradition to decorate with roses on the holiday
- Feast of Flowers - Persian, same as above



WHAT IS SHAVUOT?


It's actually a complicated question! Shavuot is the last of the three harvest festivals in the Jewish calendar, after Sukkot in the fall and Passover in early spring. Shavuot means "weeks" and is observed on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan (and the seventh day for some diasporic communities), usually during late spring. Shavuot, like its fellow biblical harvest festivals, was transformed and given new meaning after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the end of the sacrificial cult.

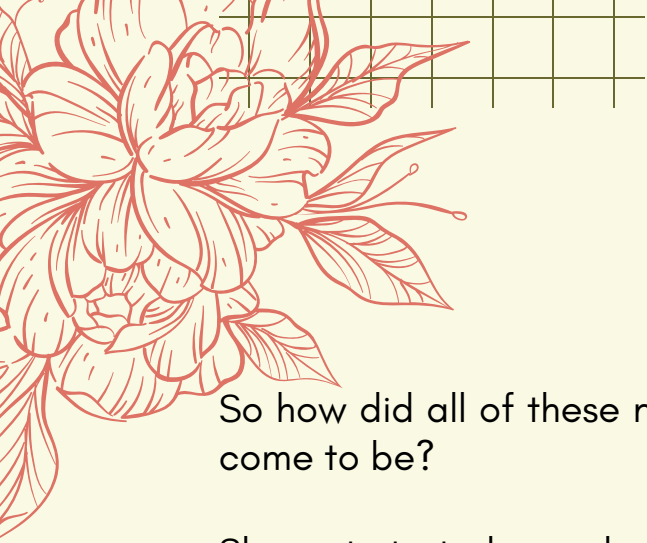
Shavuot has one of the most interesting and complicated histories as a Jewish holiday, particularly because it's undergone multiple transformations. If you thought Sukkot had a lot of names (four), Shavuot has a whopping five mainstream Hebrew names, more than any other Jewish festival. These names each say something different about the holiday and an iteration of its observance at a different point in history.

Hag ha-Katzir, Feast of the Harvest, *Hag ha-Shavuot*, Feast of Weeks, and *Yom ha-Bikkurim*, Day of the Firstfruits, all come directly from Torah and speak to the agricultural origins of the celebration.

Atzeret, meaning Concluding Festival, is another name that was added by the Rabbis and denotes the idea that Shavuot is in many ways the conclusion of Passover. Or more accurately, that the revelation of Torah on Mount Sinai was the true conclusion of the Exodus story.

Another Rabbinic name, *Zeman Mattan Toratenu*, Season of the Giving of Our Torah, is the name that can be found in festival liturgy and also refers to the rabbinic version of the holiday that commemorates the receiving of Torah on Mount Sinai.



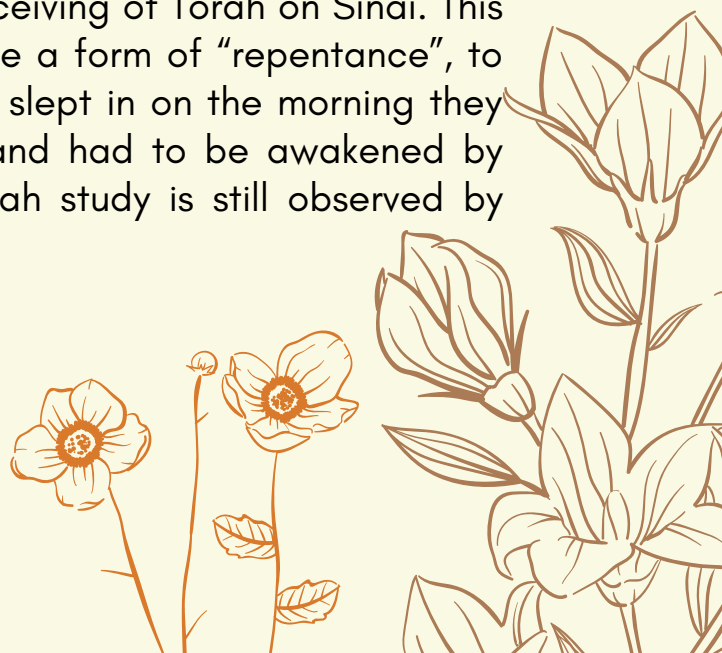


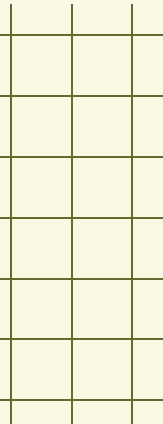

So how did all of these names and different variations of the holiday come to be?

Shavuot started as a harvest festival, when Israelites would make a pilgrimage and bring bikurim, first fruits of the harvest, to sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem. Shavuot marked the time when the barley harvest ended and the wheat harvest began. In an agricultural society, these moments were momentous occasions for celebration.

However, once the Temple was destroyed and the Israelites no longer observed the sacrificial cult, Jews had to find new ways to observe Shavuot. The rabbis of the Talmudic age transformed Shavuot into the holiday that is more familiar to many of us today, an occasion to commemorate receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai. They decided that the festival was too important to throw out altogether, and so they noted that the Torah was also given in the month of Sivan. From there, our rabbis made the leap to say that Shavuot must have been the day of the giving of the Torah.

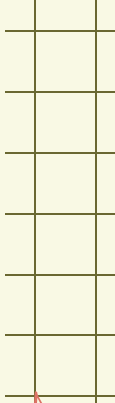
In the sixteenth century, the festival underwent another transformation, this time at the hands of the Kabbalists, Jewish mystics, in Tzfat. They created the Tikkun Leil Shavuot, a full night of studying Torah, to commemorate the receiving of Torah on Sinai. This all night study sesh is also thought to be a form of “repentance”, to make up for the fact that the Israelites slept in on the morning they were supposed to receive the Torah, and had to be awakened by Moses. This tradition of a night of Torah study is still observed by Jewish communities all over the world.





Yet another innovation came to Shavuot from within the Reform movement in the late 19th century. For Reform Jews who didn't see themselves as bound by Jewish law, the celebration of receiving the law took on a complicated position. That's where Confirmation came in. Reform leaders borrowed from their Christian counterparts and instituted a ceremony for Jewish teenagers to confirm their commitment to the Jewish community, as an alternative to b'nai mitzvah which were out of vogue in Reform circles at the time. These ceremonies became a huge event, drawing big crowds to Reform synagogues.

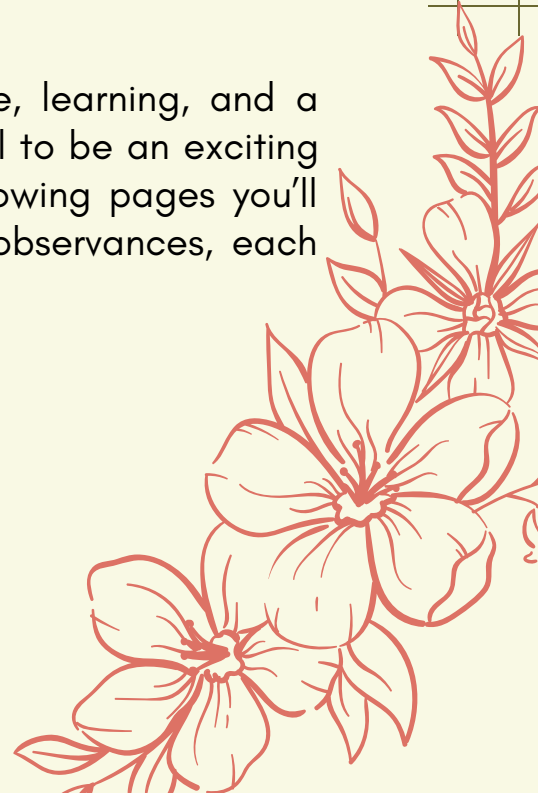
While the 1885 innovation of centering Shavuot around Confirmation worked well for Reform communities for a time, this ritual has become defunct with the reintroduction of the b'nai Mitzvah back into Reform Jewish life. Confirmation still exists and most Reform congregations still celebrate their confirmands on Shavuot, but for most communities the ceremony is not the crowd-drawing event it once was. And so, we have found ourselves back at the place where we once again need to reimagine what Shavuot can be for us as liberal Jews.



With an extensive history grounded in agriculture, learning, and a commitment to Judaism, Shavuot has the potential to be an exciting amalgamation of all of these themes. In the following pages you'll find ways to opt into each of these traditional observances, each with its own twist.

DID YOU KNOW?

Algerian Jewish Sign Language contains a special sign for the act of throwing water, a Shavuot ritual that was common in North African Jewish communities



COUNTING THE OMER

The Omer is a 49-day period counted daily from the second night of Passover until Shavuot. Omer literally means "sheaf", for in ancient times this period marked the time of the harvest when Jews would bring their first sheaves to the Temple to sacrifice. Later, Jewish mystics assigned each of the weeks of the Omer an attribute from kabbalistic tradition. In modern times, the Omer has turned into a period of self reflection, when people focus on the kabbalistic attributes or count something else altogether. As you prepare for your Shavuot celebration, you too can count down the days from exodus to revelation, from spring to summer, or count something that feels important to you.

Below you can see an artistic interpretation of counting the Omer in gif form by artist Hillel Smith. Check out his full Omer counter [here](#).





A Little Bit of Celebration






FIRST FRUITS

As the biblical celebration of the first fruits of the harvest, Shavuot is a perfect time for us to think more intentionally about the seasonality of the food we are eating. During the existence of the Temple, Shavuot marked the beginning of the harvest, which ended with a celebration on the holiday of Sukkot. As people who likely don't farm or grow most of our own foods, it's easy to fall out of touch with the natural rhythm of the earth. As you prepare your Shavuot celebration, with dairy and grain, we also invite you to think strategically and locally about the fruits and vegetables you're including in your meal. Resources like www.seasonalfoodguide.org can help you better understand what produce is seasonal and local to your area. Take a trip to your local farmers market with reusable bags in tow, and ask the farmers there, "What are your favorite fruits of the season? Which crops are you most proud of this year? What are some of the challenges of being a farmer in your location? What do you want people to know about contemporary agriculture?"


Once you've acquired your fresh produce you can make a fruit salad, a seasonal fruit cake, or a veggie charcuterie board! The seasonal harvest is yours to enjoy.






SHAVUOT RECIPES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

"Honey and milk are under your tongue" -Song of Songs 4:11



Like many Jewish holidays, Shavuot puts a heavy emphasis on food. However, the origins of the food traditions around Shavuot are somewhat unclear. As the celebration of the harvest in ancient times, wheat is an obvious choice of food for Shavuot. However, most contemporary Shavuot meals focus around dairy, and if we're being honest, no one is quite sure why! It's notable however, for dairy to sit at the center of a Jewish meal, when meat is often prized. And for those who keep kosher, a dairy meal means no meat at all. There are a few explanations as to why dairy on Shavuot. One tradition explains that because we recall revelation on Shavuot and the Torah is compared to "honey on our tongue", we should eat the biblical combo of milk and honey on the holiday. Others believe the tradition comes from the increase of dairy production due to animals' grazing habits and high birth rates in the spring. Others still explain that Torah is pure like the whiteness of milk. No matter the explanation, dairy on Shavuot has taken center stage in Jewish cultures all over the world.




While dairy has traditionally played a central role in Shavuot observance, you will note a recipe for oat milk in this section as well. Dairy production is a huge cause of greenhouse gas emissions, and non-dairy alternatives are a great way to be more mindful of our impact on the earth. Substitute any dairy-free alternatives in the recipes on the following pages.



A Greek Shavuot Dinner Menu

from *Sephardic Holiday Cooking: Recipes and Traditions* by Gilda Angel



Pan de Miel y Yoghurt

Honey-Yogurt Bread

Spanakopita

Spinach Pie

Keftes de Pescado

Salmon Croquettes

Kolokithakia Salata

Zucchini-Yogurt Salad

Horiatiki Salata

Country Salad

Rizagolon

Rice Pudding

Biscochos de Har Sinai

Mount Sinai Cookies

Spanakopita

from *Sephardic Holiday Cooking: Recipes and Traditions*

by Gilda Angel

Serves 8 - 10

A cheesy spinach filling is alternated with flaky phyllo leaves. Spanakopita may be baked in advance, covered with foil, and either refrigerated or frozen until ready to reheat.

1. Heat oil in skillet and saute onion until golden. Place in large bowl.
2. Squeeze excess liquid from spinach. Add spinach, cheeses, parsley, dill, salt, pepper, and nutmeg to onion. Beat eggs. Reserve 2 tablespoons. Add remainder to mixture and blend well.
3. Preheat oven to 350° F. Generously grease 9x13-inch baking dish. Open package of phyllo dough and remove about one-third of leaves. Keep remaining leaves between damp towels until ready to use. Layer leaves in baking dish, one at a time, brushing each leaf with a little melted butter.
4. Spread half the spinach-cheese mixture over layer of phyllo leaves. Make another layer of phyllo leaves over spinach by taking another third of the leaves and brushing each leaf with melted butter. Spread remaining spinach-cheese mixture over leaves.
5. Top with remaining third of phyllo leaves, brushing each leaf with melted butter. Brush top leaf with 2 tablespoons reserved egg. Sprinkle with sesame seeds.
6. Bake at 350° F. 40 minutes, or until crisp and golden on top. Cool in pan 15 minutes, cut into squares, and serve warm.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 packages (10 ounces each) frozen chopped spinach, thawed
- 2 cups farmer or pot cheese
- 1 cup grated Cheddar or Muenster cheese
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tablespoons snipped fresh dill
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ⅞ teaspoon pepper dash ground nutmeg
- 3 eggs
- 1 package (16 ounces) phyllo leaves
- ¾ cup butter or margarine, melted
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds

A Syrian Shavuot Dinner Menu

from *Sephardic Holiday Cooking: Recipes and Traditions* by Gilda Angel



Bugacho
Yogurt-Phyllo Pie
Samak b'Taratur
Fish with Tahina Sauce
Mejedra
Lentils and Rice
Salata
Green Salad
Sh'wendal Salata
Beet Salad
Riz b'Assal
Rice Pudding

Riz b'Assal

from *Sephardic Holiday Cooking: Recipes and Traditions*

by Gilda Angel

Serves 8 - 10

This is truly a dessert which symbolizes Israel--the land of milk and honey.

1. Place rice and water in saucepan. Add salt and bring to boil, cover, and lower heat. Simmer over low heat until all water has been absorbed.
2. Butter an 8-cup mold. Preheat oven to 325°F. Add milk, rose water, honey, and eggs to rice, and cook over low heat additional 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in dates.
3. Pour pudding mixture into buttered mold. Reduce oven temperature to 300°F. and bake 1 hour, or until pudding is set and top is golden brown. Remove from oven and cool slightly. Chill several hours or overnight, unmold and serve.

Variation: Persian Jews refer to Shavuot as the Festival of Roses. They bake this rice pudding in a ring and fill the center with fresh roses. It is served with rose petal jam.

- 1½ cups uncooked long grain rice
- 3 cups water
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups milk
- 1½ teaspoons rose water* or vanilla extract
- ⅓ cup honey (or more to taste)
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup chopped pitted dates

*Available in Greek and Middle Eastern grocery stores

An Ashkenazi Shavuos Dinner Menu

from *At Oma's Table* by Doris Schechter



Your Preferred Liptauer *
**with Black Bread, Unsalted Butter, Sliced Radishes,
Chopped Scallions, and Chopped Chives
Deviled Eggs**

Borscht

**Fresh Salmon Cakes or Fried Flounder
Cucumber-Dill Sauce
Light Potato Salad
Cauliflower with Toasted Crumbs**

***Marillenknadel* (Fresh Apricot Dumplings)
Grandmother's Cheesecake**

** a type of Eastern European cheese*

Grandmother's Cheesecake

from *Oma's Table* by Doris Schechter

Makes 1 12 by 7½-Inch Cake

This is an Austrian style cheesecake, with a crust on both the bottom and the top.

Make the dough: In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and sugar on medium speed until fluffy. Beat in the egg until incorporated. Reduce the speed to low, and add the flour slowly, beating until a ball of dough forms around the paddle. Remove the dough from the bowl, shape it in a disk, wrap it in plastic wrap, and chill for at least 1 hour.

Make the filling: In the mixer, combine the eggs and sugar until well blended. Add the cottage cheese and blend until just incorporated. Add the farina and lemon zest. Stir in the raisins until evenly distributed. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Divide the dough in half. On a lightly floured surface, roll one piece of the dough into a rectangle to fit a 12 x 7½-inch baking pan, with a slight overhang. Roll the dough over the rolling pin, center it over the pan, unroll, and line the bottom and sides, pressing the dough gently into the corners. Spoon the cheese filling into the pan and level the surface. Lightly reflower the surface and roll the remaining piece of dough into a rectangle to cover the pan and center it over the filling. Press the bottom overhang up and over the edge of the top crust. Crimp to seal the edges together. Brush the top crust and edges of the dough with the beaten egg white and sprinkle the top of the crust with sugar. Prick the top crust all over with the tines of a fork.

Bake the cheesecake until the crust is a lovely golden brown, about 40 minutes. Transfer the cake to a wire rack to cool. To serve, cut the cake into squares. Store the cake, covered with plastic wrap, in the refrigerator for 3 to 5 days. If chilled, warm the cake in a preheated 200-degree oven for 3 to 6 minutes, just to take the chill off.

FOR THE CRUST

- 12 tablespoons (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 1 extra-large egg
- 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus additional, for rolling

FOR THE FILLING

- 5 extra-large eggs, beaten lightly
- 1 cup sugar
- 1½ pounds large-curd creamed cottage cheese, or ricotta cheese
- Grated zest of 1 lemon
- ¼ cup regular farina
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 1 egg white, beaten lightly, for egg wash
- Sugar, for sprinkling on the crust

How to Make Oat Milk: An Alternative for Our Dairy Free Friends

From Minimalist Baker

8 servings, keeps for 5 days

1. Add oats, water (the lesser range will yield thicker, creamier milk, the higher range will yield thinner milk), salt, and any additional add-ins (optional) to a high-speed blender. Top with lid and cover with a towel to ensure it doesn't splash. Blend for about 30 seconds – 1 minute or until the mixture seems well combined. It doesn't have to be 100% pulverized. In fact, over-blending can make the oat milk slimy in texture.
 2. Scoop out a small sample with a spoon to test flavor/sweetness. If it's not sweet enough, add more dates.
 3. Pour the mixture over a large mixing bowl or pitcher covered with a very thin towel or a clean T-shirt. In my experience, it benefits from a double strain through a very fine towel to remove any oat remnants. A nut milk bag seemed to let too much residue through.
 4. Transfer to a sealed container and refrigerate. Will keep in the refrigerator up to 5 days (sometimes more). Shake well and enjoy cold. Do not heat or it will thicken and become gelatinous in texture. It's delicious as is or added to granolas, smoothies, and baked goods!
- 1 cup rolled oats (gluten-free if GF // or sub steel-cut oats*)
 - 3-4 cups water (use less water for thicker, creamier milk!)
 - 1 pinch salt
 - 1 whole date, pitted (optional // for sweetness // or 1 Tbsp (15 ml) maple syrup)
 - 1/2 tsp vanilla extract (optional)
 - 2 Tbsp cocoa or cacao powder for "chocolate milk" (optional)
 - 1/4 cup fresh berries for "berry milk" (optional)

DID YOU KNOW? According to a University of Oxford study, producing a glass of dairy milk results in almost three times the greenhouse gas emissions of any non-dairy milks.

IN FULL BLOOM

So much of Shavuot is intangible. Passover has the seder, with a clear guide and foods and objects. Sukkot has the sukkah, with its decor and lulav and etrog ritual. Shavuot has....well it has learning. Learning is pretty great, but for some of us it's just not tactile enough. As people who (mostly) don't farm and don't sacrifice at the Temple and may or may not believe that the Torah came from God, it can be hard to find a sense of physical rootedness in the holiday of Shavuot. That's where flowers come in. Flowers are a central symbol of Shavuot, dating all the way back to rabbinic traditions of receiving the Torah. Sometimes in Jewish tradition, over time multiple stories get told and told again, until they become combined into one story. And then people often say "a Jewish midrash says", meaning "a Jewish story says", when in fact no such rabbinic midrash exists. There is simply a story that is an amalgamation of many different ideas. This seems to be the case with a story that attempts to explain why flowers have become such an important Shavuot symbol. In many anthologies and books on Shavuot you will read something like the following:

There is a midrash, a rabbinic story, that upon giving the Torah at Mount Sinai, the entire mountain bloomed with flowers.

In fact, this idea of a Sinai covered with flowers is a combination of two ideas 1. In the Torah it says that when the Israelites were at the foot of Mount Sinai, their livestock couldn't graze, causing some to interpret that there was lush grass at the foot of the mountain. Therefore we should give out fragrant grasses in the synagogue. 2. A story in which a king tries to cut down his orchard, but decides against it because of a beautiful rose. This rose is interpreted as a metaphor for Torah. 3. And finally, lines in various biblical books that talk about roses and lilies, which are compared to the beauty of Torah.

1. *Mishnah Berurah* 494:10

2. *Vayikra Rabbah*, 23:3, *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 22:2

3. *Esther* 8:14

Somewhere along the way the grasses and the roses got mixed up, and the theme of harvest was inserted, and flowers became a central part of Shavuot. In the 20th century some synagogues even took the flower motif so seriously that having a sanctuary draped with flowers on Shavuot became an important status symbol. We care a little bit less about the status symbol and a little bit more about the physical and metaphorical beauty of flowers.

For your Shavuot observance, we invite you to make some kind of combination of flowers--it can be a bouquet, a wreath, a flower crown or something else altogether. Wear your crowns at your Shavuot meal, dress your Shavuot table with bountiful bouquets, or hang your Shavuot wreath on your door for all to see. Some flowers traditionally associated with Shavuot are roses and lilies, both coming from biblical stories. You can also use fragrant flowers, grasses, or branches, whatever floats your boat. As you put together your flower arrangement, you're invited to recite a blessing over the wonders of creation. This blessing is traditionally said at the beginning of spring, when fruit trees are beginning to blossom, but Shavuot is a perfect opportunity to recite it as well.

**בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי צור כָּל הָעוֹלָמִים שֶׁלֹא חָסַר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ כָּלֹם וּבָרָא בּו בְּרִיּוֹת
טוֹבוֹת וְאֵילָנוֹת טוֹבוֹת לְהָנוֹת בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם**

*Baruch Atah Adonai Tzur Kol HaOlamim shelo chisar ba-olamo k'lum
uvara vo b'riyot tovot v'ilanot tovot l'hanot bahem b'nei Adam.*

Blessed are You, Our God, Rock of all creation whose world lacks nothing and who made wondrous creations and beautiful trees for human beings to enjoy.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Hebrew name for lily is shushan, the same name as the city where the Purim story takes place



SHVUESLEKH

Shvueslekh, meaning "little shavuot things" or *reyzelekh*, "little roses" in Yiddish, were papercuts made by Galician Jews (Jews living in modern day Ukraine or Poland) in the 19th and 20th centuries as alternatives to floral decorations on Shavuot. Flowers were expensive and perishable, and paper was much easier to come by. Although these papercuts may look to many Americans like the paper snowflakes we made in elementary school, they actually have an important place as a folk tradition in Jewish history. In the 18th century, important Rabbi and scholar, Vilna Gaon, ruled that Jews couldn't decorate the synagogue with flowers on Shavuot, because the shrubbery reminded them too much of trees used in church by their Christian neighbors. So instead, between the cost benefit and rabbinic ruling, papercuts became an easy and beautiful alternative. Papercuts are still used in a lot of Jewish art today, and in particular in ketubot, wedding contracts.

If you have paper scraps lying around, try your hand at shvueslekh, and see if you can incorporate intentional Shavuot designs. Add your shvueslekh in with your floral decor for a beautifully decorated home on this harvest festival.

All photos of historic shvueslekh included on this sheet are from the Lviv Museum of Ethnography and Crafts



A Little Bit of Blessing



TABLE BLESSINGS

To mark many Jewish holidays, we begin with a set of rituals, just like we do on Shabbat. On the first night of Shavuot, it is customary to bring in the holiday with candles, wine, hand washing, and challah. Here, we've included these blessings as well as the Shehechiyanu to mark special times and first occasions. Usually these blessings are said on the first night (or first two nights, depending on your custom) of the holiday, but we encourage you to say them whenever you partake in your special holiday meal. If you do observe a second night, skip Shehechiyanu. For those who are observing Shavuot in nature, you will also note the inclusion of a blessing for natural wonders that can be recited during your hike, picnic, or trip to a farm.

To Bless the Festival Candles

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל
[שַׁבָּת וְשֶׁל] יוֹם טוֹב

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh
ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel
(shabbat v'shel) yom tov*

Barukh Atah Adonai, Sovereign of
time and space, who has provided us
with a path to holiness through the
observance of mitzvot and has
instructed us to kindle the (Shabbat
and) festival lights.

To Bless the Fruit of the Vine

On Shabbat, begin here:

בלחש: וְיִהי עֶרֶב וְיִהי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי

וַיְכֻלוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם. וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה,
וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ
אֹתוֹ, כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת

On Shabbat, begin here:

Quietly: And there was evening and
there was morning, the sixth day.

The heavens and the earth, and
all they contain, were completed.
On the seventh day God finished
the work, ceasing from all work
on the seventh day. Then God
blessed the seventh day, making
it holy - for on it, God ceased
from all the work of creation.
(Genesis 2:1-3)

On all other days, begin here:

On Shabbat, begin here:

Quietly: Vay'hi erev vay'hi voker yom
hashishi.

Vay'chulu hashamayim
v'haaretz v'chol tz'vaam.
Vay'chal Elohim bayom hash'vi-i
m'lachto asher asah. Vayishbot
bayom hash'vi-i mikol m'lachto
asher asah. Vay'varech Elohim
et yom hash'vi-i vay'kadeish
oto, ki vo shavat mikol m'lachto
asher bara Elohim laasot.

סְבִירֵי חֵבֵרִי

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן

On all other days, begin here:

With the assent of my friends

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God,
Sovereign of time and space, who
creates the fruit of the vine.

On all other days, begin here:

Savri chaverai/chaverotai

Barukh Atah Adonai eloheinu
melekh ha-olam, borei pri ha-
gafen.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל עַם וְרוֹמַמְנוּ מִכָּל לָשׁוֹן
וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו. וַתֵּתֶן לָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה (לשבת שְׁבֻתוֹת לְמִנוּחָה ו) מוֹעֲדִים
לְשִׂמְחָה, חֲגִים וְזִמְנִים לְשִׂשׁוֹן, אֶת יוֹם (הַשְּׁבֻת הַזֶּה וְאֶת יוֹם) חַג הַשְּׁבֻעוֹת הַזֶּה. זִמְן
מִתֵּן תּוֹרָתֵנוּ (בְּאַהֲבָה) מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ זָכָר לִיְצִיאַת מִצְרָיִם. כִּי בָנוּ בְּחִרָתָ וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָ
מִכָּל הָעַמִּים. (וְשֻׁבָּת) וּמוֹעֲדֵי קֹדֶשׁךָ (בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן) בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְשִׂשׁוֹן הִנַּחֲלָתָנוּ.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מְקַדֵּשׁ (הַשְּׁבֻת ו) יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַזְמַנִּים

Blessed are You, Adonai, our
God, sovereign of time and
space, who has chosen and
distinguished us by providing us a
path to holiness through the
observance of mitzvot. Lovingly,
Adonai our God, You have
bestowed on us (Shabbatot for
rest,) festivals for rejoicing and
holidays and seasons for delight:
this (Shabbat and this, day of)
Festival of Shavuot, the time of
our receiving of Torah, (with
love,) a sacred time, a symbol of
the exodus from Egypt. You have
chosen us and sanctified us
among all people, bestowing on
us (Shabbat and) Your hallowed
festivals (lovingly and gladly,) for
joy and delight.

Blessed are You Adonai, who
makes (Shabbat,) the people
Israel, and the festivals holy.

Barukh Atah Adonai eloheinu
melekh ha-olam, asher bahar
banu mikol am v'rom'manu
mikol lashon, v'kid'shanu
b'mitzvotav. Va-titen lanu
Adonai eloheinu b'ahavah
(shabbatot limnuhah u-) mo-
adim l'simhah, hagim u-z'manim
l'sason, (et yom ha-shabbat ha-
zeh vet yom) hag ha-shavuot
ha-zeh, z'man matan torahteinu,
(b'ahavah) mikra kodesh,
zekher litziat mitzrayim. Ki vanu
vaharta v'otanu kidashta mikol
ha-amim, (v'shabbat) u-mo-adei
kodshekha (b'ahavah u-
v'ratzon) b'simhah u-v'sason
hinhaltanu.

Barukh Atah Adonai, m'kadesh
(ha-shabbat V') yisrael
v'hazmanim.

To Mark Time

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ צוּר הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְמַן הַזֶּה

*Barukh Atah Adonai Eloheinu Tzur
ha'olam sheheheyanu v'kiyemanu
v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God,
Rock of the Universe, who has
granted us life, sustenance, and
permitted us to reach this season

To Wash Hands

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְקוֹר הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם

*Barukh Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Mekor
ha-olam, asher kid 'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God,
Source of the Universe, who hallows
us with mitzvot and has instructed us
to wash our hands

To Break Bread

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְקוֹר הָעוֹלָם
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

*Barukh Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Mekor
ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min haaretz*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God,
Source of the Universe, who brings
forth bread from the earth

Upon Seeing a Wonder of Creation

בְּרוּכָה אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם עֹשֶׂה
מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית

*B'rukha at Ya Eloheinu Ruach ha'olam,
osah ma'aseh v'reshit.*

You are blessed, our God, Spirit of
the world, Source of creation

Hallel is a service that is added to prayer to elevate and infuse joy into special times, like the harvest festivals, Hanukkah, and the New Month. Shavuot is one of those special times! In its entirety, Hallel is a recitation of Psalms 113-118, each of which expresses praise for the Sacred Powers of the Universe. Here is a poem that expresses similar immense joy and gratitude for the wonders of this world.

118 by Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

let gratitude well up like water
lovingkindness is forever
let my community call forth
lovingkindness is forever
let all who marry fear and awe call forth
lovingkindness is forever

from the straits of depression I have called out
You answer me with heart wide as the fields

open Your gates for me
I yearn to enter and give thanks

help me know that what was rejected in me
is cornerstone for something new

this day, right here, was shaped by You
I want to rejoice in it

Dear One, bring us salvation
bring us Your help

You give us light; in return we imagine
festival processions, our arms full of branches

bless all who come in Your name
lovingkindness is forever

HALLEL

Joyous Song

02 : 15

- 01 : 20





YIZKOR

Yizkor is a special memorial service conducted on Yom Kippur and the last days of each of the harvest festivals: Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot. Yizkor was originally instituted in the Middle Ages to honor those killed in the Crusades.

Over time, Yizkor has become central in how many people observe these holidays. Some people have superstitions around attending a Yizkor service if their parents are still alive. Yizkor can be said alone or in a small group.

For many people, holidays can bring up memories, either of people you celebrated with, people who brought you joy, or people with whom you had complicated relationships. We recognize that birth and death are part of the natural cycles of life, just as we recognize the cyclical ebb and flow of mother nature. If you have someone you're holding in your heart, take some time this Shavuot to remember them in a way that they would appreciate. And if you feel so moved, you can recite the Yizkor blessing:

May God remember the soul of _____ who has gone to *his/her/their* eternal home.

For the sake of repairing the world, I freely give tzedakah in *his/her/their* memory.

For the sake of *his/her/their* precious soul, let my memories, my prayers, and my acts of goodness bind *him/her/them* to the bond of life.

May I bring honor to *his/her/their* memory by word and deed.

May *he/she/they* be at one with the One who is life eternal; and may the beauty of *his/her/their* life shine forevermore.





A Little Bit of Torah



TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT

One of the most common contemporary observances of Shavuot comes in the form of an all-night Torah study session, called *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*. Literally meaning *The Order of Study on the Night of Shavuot*, this practice was implemented by Jewish mystics in the 16th century and has been adopted by many Jewish learners until today. The Kabbalists, mystical Rabbis, felt that they needed to prepare their souls for the spiritual reenacting of the revelation on Mount Sinai that has come to be associated with the festival of Shavuot. Traditional circles of Jews study the Book of Ruth about the first biblical conversion to Judaism, a section from the prophetic book Ezekiel about a Divine chariot, and the Ten Commandments in celebration of the receiving of the Torah.

For your Shavuot celebration you can feel free to read any of these biblical texts and discuss with friends or family. Alternatively, in the next few pages you'll find selections of traditional texts along with questions and prompts to help guide you through artistic exercises as a means of engaging with the texts in a new way. Host a poetry workshop with friends where you break out your favorite pens and journals and write poems about female friendship inspired by the book of Ruth. Gather round a table with paper and watercolor and interpret the mystical scene of the reception of the Ten Commandments.



DID YOU KNOW?

A Velada Vigil: The Sephardic tradition of studying sacred texts all night on Shavuot is known as velada. This is the Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) word for guarding or watching. It stems from the Spanish verb *velar* (to watch over) as well as the Latin *velare* (to cover or conceal). On the island of Rhodes, the velada included chanting special songs and prayers in Ladino and Hebrew; in the morning, those who had kept the vigil would eat rose-scented milk pudding (*sutlach*) and savory pies.

Ruth

Ruth is the most famous biblical story associated with Shavuot, beyond the receiving of the Ten Commandments.

The Book of Ruth is found in the section of the Hebrew Bible called *Ketuvim*, or Writings, and is often written on a *megillah*, a scroll, like the Book of Esther. Ruth is connected to Shavuot because the harvest sits at the center of the story. Ruth tells the story of a young Moabite woman named Ruth who follows her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Bethlehem after both of their husbands die. Ruth is famous for her commitment to the Israelite people and her friend/mother figure Naomi, and is considered by many to be the first Jew-by-Choice. Once in Bethlehem Ruth encounters Boaz during the harvest, the two marry, Ruth is accepted into the community, and she becomes the ancestor of King David.

SELECTIONS FROM THE TEXT

But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may the LORD do to me if anything but death parts me from you."

–Ruth 1:16-17

All the people at the gate and the elders answered, "We are. May Adonai make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem! And may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah—through the offspring which Adonai will give you by this young woman." So Boaz married Ruth; she became his wife, and he cohabited with her. Adonai let her conceive, and she bore a son.

–Ruth 4:11-13

Rabbi Zeira says: "The Book of Ruth is written to teach us the greatness of the reward for acts of lovingkindness."

–Ruth Rabbah 2:14

DID YOU KNOW?

The book of Ruth is one of the only biblical books thought by some scholars to be written by a woman.

WHEN THINKING ABOUT THE STORY OF RUTH, CONSIDER:

- *How do you define trust?*
- *What does it mean to take on a new identity? To leave behind an old identity?*
- *How do we welcome people into our communities?*

The Ten Commandments

In biblical times, Shavuot was a purely agricultural festival. However, after the destruction of the Temple, the rabbis had to find a way to transform this important Temple ritual into a rabbinic one. They took note of the fact that the Torah was given during the third month of the Hebrew calendar, the month of Sivan, which is the same month when Shavuot is celebrated. Our rabbis took this idea and ran with it, transforming Shavuot from a holiday about agriculture into a holiday about revelation. Thus, the Ten Commandments moved to center stage as a key text to learn on Shavuot.

The Ten Commandments, or more accurately the Ten Utterances, are actually repeated twice in the Torah with slight variations. Below you'll find the first recitation of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai.

A summarized list of the 10 commandments goes something like this:

- 1) I am Adonai your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
- 2) You shall have no other gods before Me.
- 3) You shall not take the name of Adonai your God in vain.
- 4) Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
- 5) Honor your father and your mother.
- 6) You shall not murder.
- 7) You shall not commit adultery.
- 8) You shall not steal.
- 9) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- 10) You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jews composed religious poetry in Aramaic long after they stopped speaking the language. Rabbi Meir ben Yitzhak (d. 1095) of Orléans wrote one such poem to preface the scriptural reading for Shavuot, which includes the Ten Commandments. Akdamut Millin (Introductory Words) describes the might of God, the majesty of the heavenly court, and the merit of the righteous. This evocative poem remains part of the traditional Shavuot service.

WHEN THINKING ABOUT THIS LIST, CONSIDER:

- What feels relevant to you? What feels irrelevant?
- How do you think you're supposed to follow the first commandment, which is in fact, just a statement?
- What might you add to this list for Jewish community living in a contemporary world?
- What are the rules that are important for you to live by?

The Text of Self

Shavuot is a time to learn Torah. Torah is often thought of as big T Torah, the five books of Moses, the Hebrew Bible, Rabbinic texts, etc. But in fact the word *torah* simply means teaching. Therefore, if big T Torah isn't your thing, Shavuot is also an opportunity to do other types of learning.

Revelation can be any new knowledge gained or revealed, and one of the best texts we can study is the text of ourselves! As human beings we are constantly learning and growing, trying to uncover and better different parts of ourselves. For this "study" take the opportunity to turn inwards and discover something new. This practice could help you in your self-love, your relationships, your activism, or your career. The following prompts are based on the themes of Shavuot, but as always, feel free to adjust or add your own.

In thinking about "the text of self", what are key pieces of your identity that you're thinking about often? What are key pieces of your identity that you're thinking about less often? Why might that be?

What are 3 things you've discovered about yourself in the past year? What are 3 things you hope to discover about yourself in the coming year?

What is your personal relationship to the earth? How might you want that relationship to look different?

What are parts of yourself that are hard to reveal to others? How might revealing those parts be beneficial to you?

What traits do you have that are flowing like milk? What traits do you have that are sweet like honey?

In what ways are you still hoping to blossom?



The Book of Ruth and Naomi

by Marge Piercy

At the season of first fruits, we recall
two travellers, co-conspirators, scavengers
making do with leftovers and mill ends,
whose friendship was stronger than fear,
stronger than hunger, who walked together,
the road of shards, hands joined.

Torah Poems

by Ariel Neshama Lee

Opening to Torah

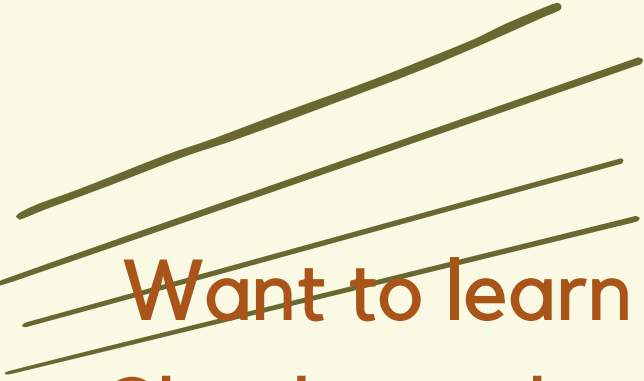
Holy One,
bring us to that mountain
where we all once stood,
our souls opened
like the buds of newborn flowers,
open to receive Your holy Torah,
written on the canopy of stars
that You created.

Torah Unfolding

Holy One,
You extend Your Hand,
and out drops a flower bud,
the petals open to reveal
Your Torah unfolding.

I am a Painter

I am a painter
not of pictures but of words –
Bereishit, Shemot, Bemidbar, Vayikra, Devarim.
Five words...five books...a scroll.
I etch these words
which contain You
forever on my soul.



Want to learn more about Shavuot?

Check out these additional resources

Judaism Unbound podcast
miniseries on Shavuot

[CLICK HERE](#)

Judasim Unbound Shavuot
Zine

[CLICK HERE](#)

Shavuot Haggadah by
Rabbi David Winship

[CLICK HERE](#)

Days United Shavuot in a
Box

[CLICK HERE](#)

BimBam: What is Shavuot?
Video for kids

[CLICK HERE](#)

Jewish Food Society
Shavuot Recipes

[CLICK HERE](#)



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