

What is Shavuot?



חג שבועות
שנת

Evening of May 21-23, 2026 • 6 - 7 Sivan, 5785

Shavuot, the Festival of Weeks, is celebrated exactly seven weeks after the first full day of Passover. Although not as well-known as other holidays, it is one of the three most important holidays on the Jewish calendar. Along with Passover and *Sukkot*, *Shavuot* is one of the *Shlosha Regalim* - Three Pilgrimage Festivals, when Jews living all over the Land of Israel made pilgrimages up to Jerusalem. These holidays correspond to times of harvest in Israel, when Jews brought offerings of thanksgiving to the priests in the Temple.

The Pilgrimage Festivals have religious significance as well. On Passover, we recall the Jews leaving Egypt; on *Sukkot*, we recall traveling through the desert and living in temporary huts. On *Shavuot*, we focus on reaching Mount Sinai and receiving the Ten Commandments. We count 49 days of the *Omer* (7 days X 7 weeks) after the Exodus, and on the 50th day the Children of Israel received the *Torah* from God.

The Ten Commandments

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| 1. אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֶשְׁרָה.
הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. | 1. I am the Eternal One your God who brought you out of the Land of Egypt. |
| 2. לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים.
לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ פֶסֶל. | 2. You shall have no other gods besides me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness of what is in the heavens above. |
| 3. לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹא. | 3. You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Eternal One your God. |
| 4. זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ. | 4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. |
| 5. כְּבֹד אֶת אָבִיךָ וְ אֶת-אִמְךָ. | 5. Honor your father and mother. |
| 6. לֹא תִרְצַח. | 6. You shall not murder. |
| 7. לֹא תִנָּאֵף. | 7. You shall not commit adultery. |
| 8. לֹא תִגְנוֹב. | 8. You shall not steal. |
| 9. לֹא-תַעֲנֶה בְרַעְדָּךְ עַד שֶׁקֶר. | 9. You shall not bear false witness against anyone. |
| 10. לֹא תַחְמֹד. | 10. You shall not covet. |

On Shavuot, it is customary to

- eat cheesecake, blintzes, and other dairy foods to recall the line from the *Song of Songs* that describes the sweetness of the Torah "like honey and milk under your tongue."
- decorate our synagogue and houses with greenery and flowers to celebrate the joy of receiving the Torah.
- stay up all night on the eve of Shavuot to study Torah or other Jewish texts, reminiscent of the Children of Israel waiting at Mt. Sinai for Moses to come down with the Ten Commandments.
- read *The Book of Ruth*, which tells a beautiful, romantic story that occurs at the beginning of the wheat harvest.



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