

OU Department of Community Engagement Shavuot Youth Resources 2014/5774

Shavuot Torah Portion Summary

Shavuot Day 1: (Exodus/Shemot 19:1-20:23; Numbers/Bamidbar 28:26-31)

Six weeks after leaving Egypt, the Jewish People arrived in the Sinai Desert and encamped at the bottom of Mount Sinai. Moshe ascended the mountain where Hashem gave him a message to tell to the people. Included in this message was Hashem's designation of the Jewish People as "His treasure out of all peoples" and a "kingdom of princes and a holy nation."

Moshe told the people Hashem's words, who, in turn, accepted upon themselves to do all that Hashem commands of them. Hashem then instructed Moshe to have the Jewish People prepare themselves, because in three days' time He would reveal Himself on top of the mountain to the entire nation. The Jewish People were commanded to purify themselves and were warned not to approach the mountain until after the divine revelation, until Hashem's presence settled on the mountain.

On the morning of the third day, on the sixth day of the third month (Sivan), seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt, thunder, lightning, a thick cloud and the piercing sound of a *shofar* came from the mountaintop. Mt. Sinai was smoking and trembling, while the sound of the *shofar* grew steadily louder. Moshe escorted the shuddering and frightened nation to the mountain, and settled them at its base.

Hashem came down upon the mountain, and called Moshe to its summit. Hashem instructed Moshe to again warn the Jewish People about the tragic end that awaited anyone who approaches the mountain itself. Only Moshe and his brother Aaron were allowed on the mountain during this time. Hashem then gave over the Ten Commandments to the Jewish Nation. They are:

- 1) Belief in Hashem.
- 2) Not to worship idols.
- 3) Not to take Hashem's name in vain (which means not to say His full name for no reason).
- 4) To keep the Shabbat.

- 5) To honor parents.
- 6) Not to murder,
- 7) commit adultery,
- 8) steal,
- 9) bear false witness or
- 10) covet (really want) another's property.

The Jewish People were left traumatized by the overwhelming revelation, the awesome "light and sound" show. They turned to Moshe and asked that from then on he serve as an intermediary between them and Hashem—Moshe should hear Hashem's word and then tell it to the people. Moshe agreed. The reading concludes with a prohibition (“do not”) against creating idolatrous graven images – considering that no image was seen when Hashem revealed Himself on Mount Sinai – and the commandment to erect a sacrificial altar. The altar stones should not be made with iron implements, nor should there be steps leading to the top of the altar.

The *Maftir* reading (from Numbers/Devarim Chapter 28) details the various sacrifices offered in the Beit Hamikdash on the holiday of Shavuot, along with the accompanying wine libations, oil and meal offerings.

Shavuot Day 2 (Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17; Numbers 28:26-31)

On the second day of Shavuot, the reading discusses the three biblical pilgrimage festivals, or *shalosh regalim* –Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot – some of the laws regarding each of these individual festivals, and the commandment to rejoice and be present in the *Beit Hamikdash* during these holidays.

The Torah portion begins by explaining that all the male firstborn of kosher cattle must be put aside and given to the *Kohen* to eat. If the animal is unblemished (no bruises or cuts) it is first offered as a sacrifice in the *Beit Hamikdash*. If it is blemished (has a bruise or cut), then it is also given to the *Kohen*, but he eats it without sacrificing it in the *Beit Hamikdash*.

Next, we read about the holiday of Pesach. We must ensure that the holiday always falls during springtime, and we must offer the Pesach Lamb on the proper day. We are commanded to eat matzah, and not leavened bread, for seven days. The prohibition against leavened bread

extends to ownership too—it is forbidden to possess anything leavened for the duration of the holiday. We may not offer the Pesach Lamb in any location other than "where G-d chooses to dwell His Name" (i.e. the *Beit Hamikdash*).

We now shift our attention to the holiday of *Shavuot*, "Weeks"; so called because it is celebrated seven weeks after the first harvesting of the grain. We are instructed to rejoice on this festival along with one's children, employees, the Leviim in one's city, strangers, orphans and widows.

The final festival discussed here, is the seven-day holiday of *Sukkot*, celebrated in the autumn, while we gather in the harvests from the fields. During this holiday we are commanded to be "only happy," thankful to *Hashem* for all that He does for us. The reading concludes with the mitzvah for every male to make a pilgrimage to the *Beit Hamikdash* three times yearly, in honor of these three holidays. And no one should appear before Hashem empty-handed—everyone is required to bring sacrifices according to what you can afford.

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Questions and Answers on Megillat Rut (Ages 6-18)

1. What middah do we learn from Megillat Rut?

Chesed, from the chesed Rut showed Naomi and Boaz showed Rut and Naomi.

2. Name Naomi's two daughter-in-laws.

Orpah and Rut

3. Who is a descendant of Rut who becomes a Jewish king?

David Hamelech

4. Why do we read Megillat Rut on Shavuot?

A) It took place at the time of Shavuot; B) Shavuot is the yartzheit of David Hamelech and it is the story of his ancestry; C) Because it is the story of a righteous convert, Rut and Shavuot is about the "giving of the Torah".

5. Why does Naomi go back to Israel?

Her husband and sons died and she wanted to go back to her Homeland and her People.

6. Why does Rut follow Naomi back to Israel?

Out of love for Naomi, she did not want her to go on the journey alone.

7. Why does Naomi tell Rut to gather grain only from Boaz's field?

Boaz was Naomi's cousin and she wanted to set Rut up with Boaz.

8. What was Rut's son's name?

Oved

9. What was Naomi's husband's name?

Elimelech

10. What were Naomi's son's names?

Machlon and Kilyon

11. Who wrote Megillat Rut?

Shmuel Hanavi

Questions and Answers on Shavuot (from easy to hard)

1. What are we celebrating on Shavuot?

The giving of the Torah, the end of the Omer and harvest time.

2. Where was the Torah given to the Jewish People?

Har Sinai

3. What does the word Shavuot mean and why is it the name of this holiday?

A) The word Shavuot means "weeks" because it marks the completion of the seven-week counting period of the Omer, between Pesach and Shavuot.

B) Shavuot also means "oaths," because on this day Hashem swore eternal devotion to the Jewish People, and we also promised to always be loyal to Hashem.

4. What are some customs that most people do on Shavuot?

A) Some people stay up the first night of Shavuot or part of the night learning; B) Many people eat dairy on Shavuot C) Some communities read Megillat Rut on Shavuot because David Hamelech's yartzheit is on Shavuot. D) To decorate the synagogue and house with flowers and greenery.

5. How long ago was the Torah given to the Jewish People?

Over 3300 years ago.

6. Explain the process of bikkurim.

Bikkurim were the first fruit of the Seven Species owned by a Jew that was given to the Kohanim in the Beit Hamikdash. This process began on Shavuot during the harvest season.

7. Name the Seven Species.

Barley, Wheat, Grapes, Olives, Pomegranates, Figs, Dates.

8. Why do we eat dairy on Shavuot?

A) Because when the Jews received the Torah they did not know how to shecht animals properly or use the not yet kosher pots to cook meat in. B) Shlomo Hamelech compares the Torah to milk: "Like honey and milk, it lies under your tongue" (Song of Songs 4:11). C) The gematria of the Hebrew word "Chalav", "milk" is 40, corresponding to the 40 days and 40 nights that Moshe spent on Har Sinai before bringing down the Torah.

9. What is the difference between Shavuot in Israel and anywhere outside of Israel?

Shavuot in Israel is celebrated for one day, and Shavuot outside of Israel is celebrated for two days.

10. What is special about the Torah reading on the first day of Shavuot?

We read the Ten Commandments, and everyone is encouraged to hear them read.

11. What are the different names of Shavuot in the Torah?

A) Chag HaShavuot; B) Chag HaKatzir; C) Yom HaBikkurim; D) Atzeret

12. Why do some stay up all night learning on the first night of Shavuot?

A) The custom is based on a midrash, which relates that the night before the Torah was given, the Jewish People retired early to be well-rested for the momentous day ahead. They overslept and Moshe had to wake them up as Hashem was waiting for them on top of Har Sinai. To rectify their mistake, many people stay up all night learning. B) The custom dates back to 1533 when Rabbi Yosef Caro invited Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz and other Kabbalistic colleagues to learn all night on Shavuot, for which they prepared for three days just like the Jews did in the desert.

Shavuot Story

"All Stars" by: Nesanel Yoel Safran

"Coach, I think we should just give up now," sighed Barry, the center of the Rams basketball team. His team-mates nodded in agreement. It was half-time of the championship game and the Wolves were ahead of the Rams by 20 points. "What are you talking about?" answered the coach confidently. "But coach, they're killing us." groaned Barry. "Each one of them is a superstar. We just can't compete!"

Coach Manhig wiped his brow and said "I know how you guys feel. They are a bunch of stars. But that's just why I think we can beat 'em." The boys' perked up a little and waited for the coach to go on. "We might not be as talented as they are its true. But we have one advantage over them; we know how to play as a team. I can see that the Wolves are all out for themselves and that they have no teamwork. In the end it's gonna backfire. If you all get back out there and try not to be selfish, work together and help each other out, you'll win. So go out there and DO IT!" The coach slapped each one of the boys on the back as he sent the team onto the court for the second half of the game.

Sure enough the Rams played with togetherness and with a minute left in the game the score was tied! Now the Wolves had the ball. Each one of them was screaming to his team-mate to pass him the ball so that he could be the hero. But the player with the ball took the shot himself and it was a wild shot that missed by a mile.

Barry, the Rams' center caught the ball, and was about to take a shot. But then he thought of his coach's words, "try not to be selfish" and decided to pass the ball to his team-mate, Jonny who was closer to the basket. Jonny scored an easy hoop just as the buzzer sounded, ending the game. The Rams had won!

After the game coach Manhig asked the team to vote for the "star of the game award." But he cracked a big smile when everyone gave him the same answer: "We all were!"

Discussion Questions

Age 3-5

Q. If there was something big and heavy that had to be moved, do you think it would be easier to move it by yourself, or if you and some of your friends moved it together? Why?

A. It would be easier if we did it all together. When we work together we can really get things done that would be much harder to do alone.

Q. How would you feel about your friends after you finished working together and got the job done?

A. We would feel very close and friendly to each other since we had all worked together.

Age 6-9

Q. What do you think makes people feel united with each other? What makes our family united?

A. When people feel like they have something in common with each other, and they have similar goals, they feel united. When people love and care for each other, they feel united. When God gave the Torah to the Jewish people, they all felt like they were one family and had the same special goal of keeping the Torah.

Q. What causes disunity and fights between people or countries?

A. One big cause is selfishness. When people are only concerned with what they want and don't care about the other guy's needs there are likely to be bad feelings and fights.

Age 10-13

Q. What does it mean that "the whole is greater than the sum (total) of its parts"?

A. Often when things or people come together, something more comes out than would if they were separate. For example: bread, cheese, and tomato sauce all taste pretty good by themselves, but when you eat them together as pizza, it all tastes much better. With people also, when they unite and work together there is the potential for much greater things than even the combined efforts of each of them working separately.

Conclusion of Discussion

Shavuot is one of the most important days of the Jewish year. On Shavuot the whole nation stood together at Mount Sinai and God gave them the Torah. The same Torah we have today!

A wonderful thing happened when they stood together at that mountain. They felt an awesome unity. In the presence of God, everyone forgot their selfish feelings and they all cared about each other just as much as they cared about themselves. They were like "one person with one heart."

Every year since then, for over 3000 years, we try to recreate these feelings of unity on Shavuot. We try to appreciate the special gift of the Torah, and remember that when we all look out for each other, amazing things can happen. In our story, a group of individuals become a team and reach the highest heights just like Bnei Yisrael did at Har Sinai.

Shavuot Games

Game #1: "Seven Weeks, Seven Steps"

Ages 2-12

Props: Toy Torah as well as material to make 7 markers; ie: belts, rope, construction paper, tape.

Activity: Place a toy Torah on one side of the room, opposite the children. Then set up seven markers separating between the group and the Torah. Explain that Sefirah is a preparation for matan torah, where we slowly advance until we're finally ready by the time Shavuot comes around. The group can come closer one marker at a time (representing the seven weeks) by performing a series of activities to prepare them for matan torah. Activities may include:

- Acting out a scene from the Torah
- Saying "naaseh venishma" in unison
- Singing "Torah, Torah"
- Trivia questions
- Setting up a fence of cups around the Torah

Game #2: "Mesorah"

Ages 2-12

Props: A toy Torah

Discussion: Hashem gave Moshe the Torah, but Moshe didn't hog all for himself. He gave it to Yehoshua, who gave it to the zkenim, etc, and that's how we have it today. But how is the next generation going to get it? It's up to us to learn the Torah so we can pass it on too.

Activity: Pick someone to be "Hashem", and another to be Moshe. "Hashem", stands on a high chair, Moshe on a lower chair, and everyone else lines up behind them. "Hashem" starts with the stuffed Torah, and when you say go he passes it to Moshe, and then to everyone else until the end of the line.

Different variations:

Ages 2-5: Then do it again while singing "Torah, Torah, Torah...".

Ages 2-5: Everyone kisses the Torah when they get it.

Ages 6-12: When you get it you have to say a Mitzvah.

Ages 6-12: Pass it backwards while singing "Torah, Torah, Torah" backwards.

Ages 6-12: Pass it in slow motion while singing slowly.

Ages 6-12: You can also play “This is a fork” while passing it. First person with the Torah says to the person to their right: This is a (insert noun, example: “fork”). The person to their right says: “A what?” The person holding the Torah says without missing a beat: “A (same noun; ie: “fork”), Then the person to their right says again: “A what?” The person holding the Torah says: “A (same noun, ie: “fork”)”. And then the person to their right finally gets it and says: “Oh, a (same noun; ie: fork). And then it is passed to the person on the right and he or she follows suit with a different noun.

Game #3: Shavuot Torah Teasers

Grades 6-12

1. In the Book of Ruth, where is the number 10 mentioned? (2 answers)
2. In the Book of Ruth, where do we find mention of a dress?
3. What generic term for "a person" appears in the Book of Ruth? Where else is this term used to refer to an unknown place?
4. In the Book of Ruth, in what context is a shoe mentioned?
5. Aside from Naomi, Ruth and Orpah, which 3 other specific women are mentioned in the Book of Ruth?
6. In the Book of Ruth, who kisses whom? (2 answers)
7. In the Book of Ruth, who is referred to as *gibor chayil* – “A mighty man of valor”? What 4 others in the biblical Prophets are described that way?
8. In the Book of Ruth, who is referred to as *ishes chayil* – “A woman of valor”? In which other biblical book does this expression appear?
9. In the Book of Ruth, where do two words appear in a row with the same root (*shoresh*)? (9 answers)
10. Who mentioned in the Book of Ruth was the grandfather of a High Priest?

Adapted from: "Rabbi Moshe Atik's Torah Teasers"

Shavuot Baking Activity:

Bible Cake: Educational and Delicious

The ingredients for this cake are hidden in Bible verses. Study first, then bake, and eat.

Ingredients:

1. 1/2 cup Judges 5:25

2. 2 cups Jeremiah 6:20
3. 2 tablespoons I Samuel 14:25
4. 6 Jeremiah 17:11
5. 1 1/2 cups I Kings 5:2
6. 2 teaspoons Amos 4:5
7. 4 teaspoons II Chronicles 9:9
8. A pinch of Leviticus 2:13
9. 1/2 cup Judges 4:19
10. 2 cups (chopped) Nahum 3:12
11. 2 cups I Samuel 30:12
12. 2 cups (chopped) Numbers 13:23

Directions:

1. Cream together 1, 2, 3 and the yolks of 4.
2. Sift together 5, 6, 7, and 8.
3. Combine the above together with 9.
4. Add 10, 11, and 12.
5. Add in stiffly beaten whites of 4.
6. Bake in a well-greased rectangular (13" X 9") pan at 325 degrees for an hour or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.

