



Shavuot

Watch overview videos:

- **What is Shavuot (1:44)**
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gqrr-n_s2ug
- **What is Shavuot Really About (2:48)**
<http://www.aish.com/h/sh/video/What-is-Shavuot-Really-About.html>
- **The Book of Ruth on Shavuot (4:43)**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iK410c9Qt8>

Basics:

Pronunciation: SHAH-voo-ot (♫ <http://bit.ly/1cuhY4e>)

Meaning: Weeks

Jewish Date: 6th, or 7th of Sivan (7 weeks after Passover begins)

Secular Date: Generally falls around mid-May to early-June

Length: 1 day (Israel) or 2 days (Diaspora other than Reform)

Themes:

- Giving of Torah
- Revelation
- Harvest – first fruits
- Dairy
- Book of Ruth

History:

Read: <http://bit.ly/1eZMgvl>

- Shavuot began as a harvest holiday and pilgrimage festival
- In ancient Israel it was a major holiday and one of the three “Chags” where people traveled to Jerusalem
- Chag haBikkurim, the giving of first fruits, begins on Shavuot and ends on Sukkot (the fall harvest festival)

Halakhah:

Read: <http://bit.ly/18bhYUX>

- Work is not permitted on Shavuot

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- Candles are lit with blessing before sundown, and recitation of Shechyanu
- Yizkor candle is lit on 2nd day before lighting of holiday candles

Customs:

Read: <http://bit.ly/1btz7Lf>

- Greetings:
 - חג שמעך Chag Sameach
 - Lit: joyous festival
 - Idiomatic: Happy Holiday
 - This greeting, now used for many holidays, originally only was used for the three official “chag” festivals – Sukkot, Shavuot, and Pesach.
- Study Torah
 - Traditional to stay up the first night of Shavuot (Erev Shavuot) and study Torah until dawn
- Lighting Candles
 - Woman and girls light festival candles
- Reading of Ten Commandments
 - Many synagogues hold services where the 10 Commandments are read aloud
- Eating of Dairy
 - There are many rationales for this tradition including
 - References to the "land of milk and honey" in the Torah
 - Being as innocent as babies, who drink milk
 - Mystical numerology of Hebrew word for milk (halav) equaling the number of days (40) Moses spent on Sinai waiting for 10 Commandments
 - Agriculturally it is the time when cheese would have been produced, and is called the "milk moon" in many cultures around the world
- Reading Book of Ruth
 - Generally agreed that we read the book of Ruth to commemorate the yartzheit of King David, who passed on Shavuot – but Ruth is also associated with the grain harvest so this is more likely the original reason
- Yerek: There is a tradition of decorating one's home and the synagogue with greenery, fruits and flowers to honor both the agricultural roots of the holiday

Liturgy:

Read: <http://bit.ly/IUVBKK>

- Torah Portions:
 - Shavuot 1: Exodus 19:1 - 20:23 & Numbers 28:26 - 28:31
 - Haftarah: Ezekiel 1:1-28; 3:12
 - Shavuot 2: Deuteronomy 15:19 - 16:17 & Numbers 28:26 - 28:31
 - Haftarah: Habakkuk 3:1-19
 - These are often adjusted on if the holiday falls on Shabbat
- Akdamut: liturgical poem often read before the Torah portion on the first day

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- Find translation here: <http://bit.ly/1d3yF4F>

Sources and Bibliography

Books:

- The Jewish Holidays: A Guide & Commentary, Michael Strassfield
- Seasons of our Joy, Arthur Ocean Waskow
- The Jewish Book of Days, Jill Hammer
- Celebrating the Jewish Year: The Spring and Summer Holidays, Paul Steinberg and Jessica Greenstein Potter
- The Rosh Chodesh Table: Foods at the New Moon, Judith Solomon
- Seasons for Celebration, Karen L. Fox and Phyllis Zimmler Miller
- Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Patkin Teutsch
- Full Moon Feast: Food and the Hunger for Connection by Jessica Prentice

Websites:

- <http://www.jewfaq.org/holidayc.htm>
- <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/holidayc.html>
- http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0007_0_06495.html
- http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/609663/jewish/What-Is-Shavuot.htm
- http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Shavuot/At_Home/Food_s.shtml
- <http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/story/about-shavuot>
- http://www.ou.org/torah/article/akdamut_and_ketuvah
- http://telshemesh.org/iyar/shavuot_king_david_and_ruth_.html
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shavuot>
- http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2160/jewish/Eating-Dairy-Foods.htm
- http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2159/jewish/Adorning-the-Home-with-Greenery.htm
- http://telshemesh.org/iyar/first_fruits_rituals.html
- <http://www.reformjudaism.org/shavuot-customs-and-rituals>
- http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Shavuot/History/Modern/Few_Rituals.shtml
- <http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/shavuot>

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