Dear Youth Directors, Youth chairs, and Youth Leaders,

**NCYI is excited to continue our very successful Parsha Nation Guides.** I hope you’re enjoying and learning from Parsha Nation as much as we are. Putting together Parsha Nation every week is indeed no easy task. It takes a lot of time and effort to ensure that each section, as well as each age group, receives the attention and dedication it deserves.

**We inspire and mold future leaders.** The youth leaders of Young Israel have the distinct honor and privilege to teach and develop the youth of Young Israel. Children today are constantly looking for role models and inspirations to latch on to and learn from. Whether it is actual sit down learning sessions, exciting Parsha trivia games, or even just walking down the hall to the Kiddush room, our youth look to us and watch our every move.

**It’s not always about the things we say, it’s about the things we do.** Our children hear and see everything we do whether we realize it or not. This year we are taking our Youth Services to new heights as we introduce our Leadership Training Shabbaton. This engaging, interactive shabbaton will give youth leader’s hands on experience and practical solutions to effectively guide your youth department.

**Informal education is key.** What the summer shows us as educators is that informal education can deliver better results and help increase our youth’s connection to Hashem. More and more shuls are revamping their youth program to give their children a better connection to shul and to Hashem. The NCYI is here to help you reconnect with your youth departments and bring more participation.

**Thank you for being a light to future generations.** You are doing incredible work that should not be taken lightly. You should be proud to call yourself a Young Israel Youth Leader as you have the unique opportunity to make a real difference in so many young people’s lives. Keep up the amazing work.

We are looking forward to hearing great things from everyone.

Our doors are always open.

**NCYI Department of Synagogue Services**

*Youth@youngisrael.org*

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Program Guide Breakdown

Theme- Each year our curriculum will focus on a theme. By centering the entire year around one overarching theme, our youth group participants will understand different characteristics and concepts that will help them achieve this lofty goal. This year’s theme is Manhigut (leadership). Our goal is for our children to view themselves as leaders and to inspire them to play a leadership role every day.

Parsha Review- Each week group leaders will have the opportunity to roundup the parsha in two or three paragraphs. By giving over the parsha in a short and simple way, group participants will be able to grasp the parsha as a whole and to get them to think globally and conceptually.

Parsha Questions- No Shabbat morning group is complete without a list of parsha questions. These questions allow group participants the opportunity to win fun prizes while increasing their Torah knowledge. Questions vary from basic understanding of story line to challenging source-based material. The answers are provided as well.

Tefillah Treasure- Many youth directors have asked for help when it comes to teaching tefillah to children. This is a problem that not only shuls are dealing with. Schools, camps, and youth organizations are having trouble developing creative ideas to help children understand tefillah. Over the course of the year, this section will highlight one aspect of davening by providing both the Hebrew and English text, and one explanatory idea. The older the age group, the more we delve into the idea. This section is designed to help group participants follow the flow of tefillah while understanding what they are saying.

Group Activity- Now the fun begins! We start off with a GOAL. Each game has a purpose. The youth leaders should familiarize themselves with the goal before implementing the game.

Discussion Portion- After the game is over and the participants are settled down, the youth leaders should facilitate a discussion. The guidelines for this discussion are broken down into easy to use instructions. Youth leaders should review the discussion topics and goals before the start of morning groups.

Story- Each week we will include a story that addresses a modern day concern with lesson taken from that week’s parsha.

Jewish Leader of the Week- In keeping with our theme of Manhigut, every week a different Jewish Leader from modern Jewish history will be highlighted. This will allow group participants to expand their knowledge of history and to learn how they can be a Jewish leader in today’s society.

Teen Minyan Packet- This packet is filled with stories, riddles, points to ponder, and more.

Leader Tip- Each section has some great tips for leaders and how they should conduct that section.
### Shabbat Morning Groups Lesson Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Duration</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>Welcome parents and children in to the group room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-35 min</td>
<td>Davening</td>
<td>Depending on your group size and level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Introduction to Yearly Theme (Manhigut)</td>
<td>Refer to Handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Parsha Review</td>
<td>Prep participants for parsha questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Parsha Questions</td>
<td>Prizes and awards should also be given out if participants answer correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>Understanding the Goal</td>
<td>Leaders should start prepping for Shabbat activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 min</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Your choice of two games to play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Follow Up Discussion</td>
<td>Refer to materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Parsha Song</td>
<td>This is for younger groups only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 min</td>
<td>Free Game Play</td>
<td>Groups can break for free game play or continue their own programing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>Assemble in a circle and have participants read sections of the story out loud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 min</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Refer to handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 min</td>
<td>Jewish Leader of the Week</td>
<td>Refer to handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 min</td>
<td>Tefillah Treasures</td>
<td>Refer to Handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Parent Pick up/Dismissal</td>
<td>Parents pick up their children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Time:**

2 hours & 40 min of programing!
**WHAT IS SHAVUOT ALL ABOUT?**

It is ironic that Shavuot is such a little-known holiday. Because in fact, Shavuot commemorates the single most important event in Jewish history -- the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Shavuot is the culmination of the seven-week-long "counting of the Omer" that occurs following Passover. The very name "Shavuot" means "weeks," in recognition of the weeks of anticipation leading up to the Sinai experience. (Since Shavuot occurs 50 days after the first day of Passover, it is sometimes known as "Pentecost," a Greek word meaning "the holiday of 50 days.")

3,300 years ago, after leaving Egypt on the night of Passover, the Jews traveled into the Sinai desert. There, the entire Jewish nation -- 3 million men, women and children -- directly experienced divine revelation:

*God spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you were hearing the sound of words, but you were not seeing a form, only a sound. He told you of His covenant, instructing you to keep the Ten Commandments, and He inscribed them on two stone tablets.* (Deut. 4:12-13)

The giving of the Torah was an event of awesome proportions that indelibly stamped the Jewish nation with a unique character, faith and destiny. And in the 3,300 years since this event, Torah ideals -- monotheism, justice, responsibility -- have become the moral basis for Western civilization.

Perhaps the reason for the relative obscurity of Shavuot is because this holiday has no obvious "symbols" of the day -- i.e. no Shofar, no Sukkah, no Chanukah Menorah.

On Shavuot, there are no symbols to distract us from the central focus of Jewish life: the Torah. So how do we commemorate Shavuot? It is a widespread custom to stay up the entire night learning Torah. And since Torah is the way to self-perfection, the Shavuot night learning is called *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*, which means "an act of self-perfection on the night of Shavuot."

At synagogue services on Shavuot morning, we read the biblical book of Ruth. Ruth was a non-Jewish woman whose love for God and Torah led her to convert to Judaism. The Torah intimates that the souls of eventual converts were also present at Sinai, as it says: "I am making [the covenant] both with those here today before the Lord our God, and also with those not here today." (Deut. 29:13)

Ruth has a further connection to Shavuot, in that she became the ancestor of King David, who was born on Shavuot, and died on Shavuot.

On Shavuot, it is customary to decorate the synagogue with branches and flowers. This is because Mount Sinai blossomed with flowers on the day the Torah was given. The Bible also associates Shavuot with the harvest of wheat and fruits, and marks the bringing of the first fruits to the Holy Temple as an expression of thanksgiving. (see Exodus 23:16, 34:22, Numbers 28:26)

There is a universal Jewish tradition of eating dairy foods on Shavuot. The reason has been offered by many scholars, some of which are more convincing than others. We offer a selection:

1. The Biblical book Song of Songs (4:11) refers to the sweet nourishing value of Torah by saying: "It drips from your lips, like honey and **milk** under your tongue."
2. The verse in Exodus 23:19 juxtaposes the holiday of Shavuot with the prohibition of mixing milk and meat. On Shavuot, we therefore eat separate meals -- one of milk and one of meat.
3. Upon receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, the Jews immediately became obligated in the laws of **Sh’chita** -- slaughter of animals. Since they did not have time to prepare kosher meat, they ate dairy instead.

**LEADER TIP:** Shavuot is all about getting the Torah, but Torah isn’t always the most exciting thing in kids’ lives. Try to connect Torah to each kid in their own unique way. There are many many ways to connect, no two are exactly the same.
**SHAVUOT FACTS**

**Sefira Information Sheet**
1. There are 50 full days of sefirah. The first day is the second day of Pesach and the last is Shavuot.
2. If you miss one day of Sefirah you can no longer count with a beracha.
3. If you count during the day (if you forgot at night) you can still count the following night with a beracha.
4. Lag Ba’Omer is the 33rd day of the omer.
5. Two customs prevail regarding the minhagei aveilut during sefirah. One extends the mourning from pesach till lag ba’omer; the other extends from rosh chodesh iyar till shavuot.

**Shavuot Information Sheet**
1. Shavuot is the only one of the shalosh regalim without it’s own unique mitzvah.
2. We have a custom to learn all night the first night of shavuot to be metaken the fact that Bnei Yisrael fell asleep the night of matan Torah and had to be woken to receive the Torah.
3. There is a minhag to eat dairy foods on shavuot. (Can you guess why?)
4. There is a minhag to place plants and trees in shul on shavuot. (Can you guess why?)

**Har Sinai Information Sheet**
1. I am the Lord your God
2. Thou shalt not have other Gods
3. Thou shalt not take God’s name in vain
4. Keep the Sabbath
5. Honor they father and they mother
6. Thou shalt not murder
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery
8. Thou shalt not steal
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness
10. Thou shalt not covet

**LEADER TIP:** Give out points to whoever knows answers, first one to 613 points wins!
SHAVUOT ACTIVITY

GOAL: To teach the kids about the names and minhagim of Shavuot

ACTIVITY: Headbands: To learn the names of Shavuot
a. Rules: Once a kid has a headband on, put an index card with a name on the headband without the kid seeing. The other kids must then have him guess the name (either by the guesser asking questions, or going around and having each kid in the circle give a hint. The second is much easier but makes the game go much quicker. Also, if the kids don’t know any of the names you may want to give them a quick rundown before you begin)
b. After each name is guessed, explain where this name comes from

Chag Shavuot – The Festival of Weeks. This name is the direct link with Sefirat Ha’Omer. Sefirat Ha’Omer connects Pesach, the time of our physical redemption to Shavuot, the time of our spiritual redemption 7 weeks later. We see how leaving Egypt and becoming free people was great, but lacked purpose...

Z’man Matan Torateinu – The Time of the Giving of our Torah. On Rosh Chodesh Sivan 2448, Bnei Yisrael arrived at Midbar Sinai. A Midrash tells of how the Torah was offered to all the other nations, but none of them were willing to take it on, until Bnei Yisrael were offered and said ‘Na’aseh V’nishmah’ (We will do and we will hear – we’ll agree to it, and then learn what it’s all about). Now, we had and have a purpose to our lives. 7 weeks had to pass until we had shaken off the feeling of being subservient to the Egyptian taskmasters and were ready to accept upon ourselves the spiritual and only legitimate master – Hashem.

Chag HaBikkurim – The Festival of the First Fruits. From this day until Sukkot the first fruits of the field (wheat, barley, grapes, pomegranates, figs, olives, dates), were brought by the farmer to the Beit Hamikdash as tokens of gratitude to Hashem.

Atzeret – Conclusion. This is similar to Shemini Atzeret at the end of Sukkot, and this Atzeret shows the conclusion of a process that began on Pesach.

Chag HaKatzir – The Festival of the Cutting of the Crop. In Biblical times, Shavuot was mainly a harvest festival. On the 50th day after bringing the omer, the start of the wheat harvest was celebrated by bringing a thanksgiving offering of 2 loaves of bread made from the new crop.

Minhagim: Discussion
a. Intro- Shavuot is the only chag that has no specific mitzvot particular to it. On Sukkot we must dwell in the sukkah, on Pesach we must retell the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, but on Shavuot, we have only minhagim...
b. Minhagim:
1. Decorate Shuls and Homes with flowers- For one thing, Shavuot is a harvest festival. however, it is also connected to an ancient legend. It is said that when the Torah was given on Har Sinai, the barren mountain became covered with lush plants and fragrant flowers. The essence of the legend is that Torah brings the fragrance of spirituality into Jewish life.
2. Eating Dairy- At the time of Matan Torah, Bnei Yisrael did not yet know the many Kashrut laws concerning the preparation of meat, and keeping meat and milk separate, so they kept to the safer option and only ate dairy foods.
3. Tikkun Leil Shavuot (Staying up all night learning)- This originated from kabbalists (mystics) in Tsafat in the 16th century. A reason given for this is that Bnei Yisrael should have been preparing themselves for the great event the night before they received the Torah, but instead, they had a bit of a nap. Hashem had to wake them up to receive the Torah. Yes, that’s right, the biggest thing to ever happen to Am Yisrael... and we overslept!!! We therefore stay up all night, shteiging hard, so that we are awake and ready to accept the Torah again for ourselves.

DISCUSSION: This activity is really to try and explain to all of the kids what’s going on over this two day holiday. Pesach kids know about matzah, Sukkot kids know about sukkahs and arba minim, Shavuot is a little harder to understand. Be open to questions. There’s a lot that goes on over Shavuot that young kids don’t know about or even understand. Use this opportunity to explain to them as much as you can that it’s a very special holiday and not just another random Shabbat at groups.

LEADER TIP: Connect with the kids on their level. There are so many different ways to learn Torah and be a Torah Jew. Talk to them in ways they will be able to understand the holiday in their own way.
Before you read: The holiday of Shavuot celebrates the birthday of the Jewish people as a unique nation. This occurred when God gave us the Torah, that great source of wisdom and guidance on how to live a happy, meaningful life. When we received the Torah, we were all united, like 'one person with one heart.' The value and power of unity and cooperation is one of the big lessons of Shavuot that we carry with us until today.

"MIXED DRINKS"

Laura could almost count all the money she'd be making as she put the big, sweet carrots through the juicer. It was the first really hot week of the season and she was sure that very few people passing her sidewalk juice stand would be able to resist buying a cool, natural drink on a day like today. When she had discussed the idea with her neighbor, Jackie, she had agreed that the idea was a sure hit.

Laura packed up the fresh juice, together with a couple of ice-packs, and lugged the heavy cooler out to the table she had set up on the edge of her lawn. At only 99 cents a cup, she was sure she'd be rushing home soon to make a second batch.

"Would you like a cool drink?" Laura called out cheerfully to a lady who was walking by pushing a double-stroller.

"Oh, thanks, but I just had a big cup of apple juice," she said with a smile.

"You did?" Laura asked, confused.

"Yeah, I bought it from your friend next door."

Jackie!

She looked over and sure enough, Jackie had set up a juice stand of her own, and it was crowded with customers. Laura couldn't believe it. What a nerve! Well, she would show her.

"FRESH JUICE SPECIAL! BUY ONE, GET ONE FREE!" Laura yelled out really loud. The people standing in front of Jackie's stand heard her and most of them came her way to take advantage of the bargain.

Laura smiled as she poured cup after cup. She wasn't making as much money as she hoped for with all her hard work, but still...

"Hey what's the idea of stealing my customers?" rang out a familiar, but at the moment not-too-friendly voice. Laura looked up at Jackie, who was now fuming.

"Well it's no worse than stealing my idea!" Laura snapped back.

Jackie mumbled something under her breath and ran back to her stand.
It was a long, hot afternoon for both girls, as they ran themselves ragged, working frantically to out-sell each other.

"FRESH APPLE JUICE! REALLY CHEAP!" called out Jackie to everyone within earshot.

"CARROT JUICE! FRESHER AND CHEAPER!!" Laura would counter, even louder and vice versa. They attracted a crowd, but it seemed that more people were just stopping to see what the commotion was all about than to actually buy a drink from either of them.

It occurred to each girl how it would be so much easier, not to mention more fun and profitable, if they weren't competing like that. But each one figured that competition was what the other one wanted.

As the sun started going down and people stopped walking along the street, an exhausted Laura began to clean the sticky table and bring it and all her things back into her garage by herself. For all of her work, her moneybox was still pretty light.

She came back out to make sure she hadn't forgotten anything and saw a figure leaning against the nearby mailbox. Was it one last customer who needed a drink? She came closer and saw it was Jackie, who looked just as tired as she did. Laura didn't know whether to smile at her like a friend or scowl at her like a competitor. She was too zonked to fight, so she just shrugged her shoulders, threw up her hands and said, "There's got be a better way."

Jackie nodded and said, "There is, Laura and I've got an idea...."

The next day was even hotter, and the people neighborhood bought plenty of cool drinks from the newly combined, "L & J's ALL-NATURAL CARROT-APPLE JUICE COCKTAIL" stand that the two girls had set up together in between their houses. They were both much more relaxed as they split up all the jobs they had to do and found that working together they were making a lot more money than each one had separately.

"Thanks for the drink. What a great combo!" said one of their many satisfied customers.

What a great combo indeed.

Discussion Questions

Q. How did Laura feel at first when she saw Jackie had set up a juice stand next to hers?
A. She felt angry and tried to do things so she would be successful and Jackie wouldn't.

Q. How did the girls feel in the end?
A. They saw how it wasn't good for either of them to fight against each other, so they decided to team up and had a much easier and better time.

LEADER TIP: Why is being one nation so important? Should we look at the Jewish people as everyone being the same deep down or rather that everyone is different and that’s what brings us together?

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Ruth HaMoavia

Ruth was a Moabitess, who married into the Hebrew family of Elimelech and Naomi, whom she met when they left Bethlehem and relocated to Moab due to a famine. Elimelech and his two sons died leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law as widows. When Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, Ruth decided to go with her despite the fact that Orpah, Naomi's other daughter-in-law went back home. Ruth is a model of loving-kindness (hesed): she acts in ways that promote the well-being of others.[2] In Ruth 1:8-18, she demonstrated hesed by not going back to Moab but accompanying her mother-in-law to a foreign land. She chose to glean, despite the danger she faced in the field (Ruth 2:15) and the lower social status of the job. Finally, Ruth agrees with Naomi’s plan to marry Boaz, even though she was free of family obligations, once again demonstrating her loyalty and obedience (Ruth 3:10). Ruth was a convert to Judaism. She gave up so much in order to become a Jew. She recognized how important the Torah and Hashem are and she took them upon herself. Because of the great person she was and the amazing things she did, David HaMelech came from her.

LEADER TIP: Rut recognized Judaism was the real way of living. Have you ever fully admitted to being in the wrong or recognizing that an opinion or belief different than yours was the correct one?
Akdamot is a poem read on Shavuot. It is read on the first day of Shavuot before reading the Torah. The original practice was for it to be recited after the reading of the first pasuk but in the past few centuries, the practice has developed in many congregations that it is read after the kohen has been called up, but before he has made the blessing.

The reason for the original practice was that, from Biblical times to well into medieval times, each verse of the Torah reading in Hebrew would be followed by its interpretation into Aramaic, and therefore it would be appropriate, after the first Hebrew verse was read, for another reader to provide an Aramaic gloss including this "introduction". However, when the simultaneous Aramaic interpretation fell into disuse, the recitation of Akdamut remained between the first and second Hebrew verses, where it no longer seemed an appropriate interruption, so it was relocated to before the commencement of the Torah reading.

In most synagogues it is read responsively: the ba'el korei singing two verses, and the congregation responding with the next two verses. The Structure Akdamut has ninety lines; the first forty-four begin with a double Aleph-Bet; Aleph, Aleph, Bet, Bet, and so on. The first letters of the next forty-six lines make up an acrostic with the authors name and a prayer for a blessing.

Each line of the poem ends in the letters "Tav," the last letter of the Aleph Bet, and "Aleph," the first letter of the Aleph-Bet, to show that when one reaches the last letter, the "end" of the Torah, one immediately turns and restarts the Torah from its "beginning".

**LEADER TIP:** Go through the alphabet (either Hebrew or English), just like Akdamot, and try to come up with something great about the Torah using every letter! Be creative!
WHAT IS SHAVUOT ALL ABOUT?

It is ironic that Shavuot is such a little-known holiday. Because in fact, Shavuot commemorates the single most important event in Jewish history -- the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Shavuot is the culmination of the seven-week-long "counting of the Omer" that occurs following Passover. The very name "Shavuot" means "weeks," in recognition of the weeks of anticipation leading up to the Sinai experience. (Since Shavuot occurs 50 days after the first day of Passover, it is sometimes known as "Pentecost," a Greek word meaning "the holiday of 50 days.")

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LEADER TIP: Shavuot is all about getting the Torah, but Torah isn’t always the most exciting thing in kids’ lives. Try to connect Torah to each kid in their own unique way. There are many many ways to connect, no two are exactly the same.
Let's put Shavuot into context: it is the festival that comes after Pesach (Passover). How many days separate the two holidays (if your count begins at the second night's Passover seder)?

49. Shavuot falls exactly seven weeks after Pesach, representing the time marked by the harvest season in Israel.

The seven-week period between Passover and Shavuot, which we count one day at a time, is called the Counting of the ________. Omer. On the Counting of the Omer (in Hebrew, S'firat haOmer): literally, an "Omer" is a unit of measure. During the Temple period, each day beginning with the second night of Pesach and ending with Shavuot, an omer, or sheaf of barley, would be taken to the Temple as a harvest offering.

Shavuot is one of the three pilgrimage festivals in the Jewish holiday cycle. What are the other two? Passover and Sukkot. During the Temple period, the festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot marked the three times of year that all Israelites would have to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to bring offerings to the Temple.

In the Jewish holiday cycle, it is always important to keep track of what we eat and when we eat it. I mean, we wouldn't want Grandma to serve challah on Pesach or latkes on Rosh Hashanah. True or false: It is customary to eat meat at all meals on Shavuot.

F. One of the reasons I enjoy this holiday so much is that we are supposed to eat Cheesecake, blinses, brie cheese, and all of that yummy dairy!

What does Shavuot commemorate?
Receiving the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. Israel receiving the Ten Commandments is also the Torah portion that is read on Shavuot.

It is customary to stay up all night between Erev Shavuot and Shavuot morning and study Torah. T or F?
T. Yes, that's right... pull out your Tanakh and your favorite Gemara, Shavuot is the time of year when you should schedule your big Torah-studying pajama party so that we can be all ready to stand again and remember receiving the Torah and the Ten Commandments at Sinai!

It is customary to read this book of the Tanakh (Hebrew Scriptures) on Shavuot. Ruth. There are varying reasons given for this custom, although none seems to be definitive.

What is the name of the liturgical poem, written in the middle ages, extolling the greatness of God, that is read on Shavuot? Akdamut. Stylistically, the first 44 lines of Akadmut are written in double acrostic format, based on the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This poem has been attributed to Rabbi Meir of Worms.

The aesthetic of Shavuot is defined by decorating homes and synagogues with greenery and flowers. True or false: this is because Shavuot is also the birthday of the trees and corresponds with the time of first blooms in Israel.
F. Actually, that description would be of the holiday of Tu B'Shevat. We decorate our homes and synagogues with flowers and greenery because, according to Midrash (Rabbinic story/legend based on the Torah), Mt. Sinai suddenly blossomed with flowers and blooms in anticipation of the revelation of the Ten Commandments.

There is a custom to eat "milchigs" on Shavuot. Pharaoh's daughter drew Moshe out of the water on the 6th of Sivan, and he was willing to be nursed only by a Hebrew woman. Therefore we recall Moshe's merit on Shavuot by eating milk foods. Furthermore, the numerical values of the letters of the Hebrew word chalav (milk) add up to 40 corresponding to the 40 days Moshe spent on Mount Sinai.

I Did Not Know That!

LEADER TIP: Give out points to whoever knows answers, first one to 613 points wins!
**SHAVUOT ACTIVITY**

**GOAL:** To teach the kids about the importance of the greatest gift in the world, the Torah!

**ACTIVITY:** Print out a bunch of pictures of random items that you’d think would make the kids’ dream gift. (Ex: laptop, video games, gift card to a popular restaurant, dog, etc.) Also put in Jewish items such as tefillin, chumash, siddur, sefer torah, etc. Split the kids up into groups. Give each group a set of all of the “gifts”. Have them rank the gifts in order from what they would most want to what they would least want. Chances are there will be debates among them about which gift is the best. That’s ok, let them talk it out amongst themselves. Once they come to a decision about their top 3 gifts, have them present it to the rest of the group. If you’d like, you can even have a debate between the groups as to which gift is the best.

**DISCUSSION:** The idea behind this activity is to discuss with the kids what truly is the greatest gift in the world. Chances are, the Jewish items aren’t going to make it into the top of the list of best gifts. Ask the kids why they put it in the order that they did. Why didn’t the Jewish items make it too high on the list? And if they did put it high, why did they decide to do that? Hashem gave the Jewish people the Torah, which is truly the greatest gift in the world. Torah isn’t just some random book that just sits on your coffee table. It is so much more than that. It is a way of life, it is what makes the Jewish people so special, and it helps us live the best and happiest lives possible. All of these items are cool and exciting, but how long do they last? Either they will break or a new edition will come out making the old edition nothing special anymore, and possibly even garbage to some. The Torah never gets old, it never loses its excitement, it never breaks, and a new edition will never come out. The Torah is the most precious gift we have and it’s important to always take good care of it and appreciate it every single day.

**LEADER TIP:** We are so caught up in this world with immediate gratification and technology and materialistic things. How can we materialize spiritual things such as the Torah, and spiritualize material things, in order to live our lives to the utmost Torah potential?

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"MIXED DRINKS"

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"Well it's no worse than stealing my idea!" Laura snapped back.

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It was a long, hot afternoon for both girls, as they ran themselves ragged, working frantically to out-sell each other.
"FRESH APPLE JUICE! REALLY CHEAP!" called out Jackie to everyone within earshot.

"CARROT JUICE! FRESHER AND CHEAPER!! Laura would counter, even louder and vice versa. They attracted a crowd, but it seemed that more people were just stopping to see what the commotion was all about than to actually buy a drink from either of them.

It occurred to each girl how it would be so much easier, not to mention more fun and profitable, if they weren’t competing like that. But each one figured that competition was what the other one wanted.

As the sun started going down and people stopped walking along the street, an exhausted Laura began to clean the sticky table and bring it and all her things back into her garage by herself. For all of her work, her moneybox was still pretty light.

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The next day was even hotter, and the people neighborhood bought plenty of cool drinks from the newly combined, "L & J's ALL-NATURAL CARROT-APPLE JUICE COCKTAIL" stand that the two girls had set up together in between their houses. They were both much more relaxed as they split up all the jobs they had to do and found that working together they were making a lot more money than each one had separately.

"Thanks for the drink. What a great combo!" said one of their many satisfied customers.

What a great combo indeed.

Discussion Questions

Q. What life-lesson did the girls learn that day?
A. They had thought that the best way to succeed was to compete with each other and make the other one lose, but they discovered they were much happier once they found a way to cooperate and help each other win.

Q. Do you think people are happier when they compete against each other or cooperate and work together for a common goal? Why?
A. While there is a certain thrill in competition (when you win, that is), that thrill is short term and at the expense of someone else. Working together to achieve a common goal gives a person a much deeper and more spiritual sense of satisfaction.

LEADER TIP: Why is being one nation so important? Should we look at the Jewish people as everyone being the same deep down or rather that everyone is different and that’s what brings us together?
Ruth HaMoavia

Ruth was a Moabitess, who married into the Hebrew family of Elimelech and Naomi, whom she met when they left Bethlehem and relocated to Moab due to a famine. Elimelech and his two sons died leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law as widows. When Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, Ruth decided to go with her despite the fact that Orpah, Naomi’s other daughter-in-law went back home. Ruth is a model of loving-kindness (hesed): she acts in ways that promote the well-being of others.[2] In Ruth 1:8-18, she demonstrated hesed by not going back to Moab but accompanying her mother-in-law to a foreign land. She chose to glean, despite the danger she faced in the field (Ruth 2:15) and the lower social status of the job. Finally, Ruth agrees with Naomi’s plan to marry Boaz, even though she was free of family obligations, once again demonstrating her loyalty and obedience (Ruth 3:10). Ruth was a convert to Judaism. She gave up so much in order to become a Jew. She recognized how important the Torah and Hashem are and she took them upon herself. Because of the great person she was and the amazing things she did, David HaMelech came from her.

LEADER TIP: Rut recognized Judaism was the real way of living. Have you ever fully admitted to being in the wrong or recognizing that an opinion or belief different than yours was the correct one?
Akdamot is a poem read on Shavuot. It is read on the first day of Shavuot before reading the Torah. The original practice was for it to be recited after the reading of the first pasuk but in the past few centuries, the practice has developed in many congregations that it is read after the kohen has been called up, but before he has made the blessing.

The reason for the original practice was that, from Biblical times to well into medieval times, each verse of the Torah reading in Hebrew would be followed by its interpretation into Aramaic, and therefore it would be appropriate, after the first Hebrew verse was read, for another reader to provide an Aramaic gloss including this "introduction". However, when the simultaneous Aramaic interpretation fell into disuse, the recitation of Akdamut remained between the first and second Hebrew verses, where it no longer seemed an appropriate interruption, so it was relocated to before the commencement of the Torah reading.

In most synagogues it is read responsively: the ba'el korei singing two verses, and the congregation responding with the next two verses. The Structure Akdamut has ninety lines; the first forty-four begin with a double Aleph-Bet; Aleph, Aleph, Bet, Bet, and so on. The first letters of the next forty-six lines make up an acrostic with the authors name and a prayer for a blessing.

Each line of the poem ends in the letters "Tav," the last letter of the Aleph Bet, and "Aleph," the first letter of the Aleph-Bet, to show that when one reaches the last letter, the "end" of the Torah, one immediately turns and restarts the Torah from its "beginning".

**LEADER TIP:** Go through the alphabet (either Hebrew or English), just like Akdamot, and try to come up with something great about the Torah using every letter! Be creative!
WHAT IS SHAUVUOT ALL ABOUT?

It is ironic that Shavuot is such a little-known holiday. Because in fact, Shavuot commemorates the single most important event in Jewish history -- the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Shavuot is the culmination of the seven-week-long "counting of the Omer" that occurs following Passover. The very name "Shavuot" means "weeks," in recognition of the weeks of anticipation leading up to the Sinai experience. (Since Shavuot occurs 50 days after the first day of Passover, it is sometimes known as "Pentecost," a Greek word meaning "the holiday of 50 days.")

3,300 years ago, after leaving Egypt on the night of Passover, the Jews traveled into the Sinai desert. There, the entire Jewish nation -- 3 million men, women and children -- directly experienced divine revelation:

God spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you were hearing the sound of words, but you were not seeing a form, only a sound. He told you of His covenant, instructing you to keep the Ten Commandments, and He inscribed them on two stone tablets. (Deut. 4:12-13)

The giving of the Torah was an event of awesome proportions that indelibly stamped the Jewish nation with a unique character, faith and destiny. And in the 3,300 years since this event, Torah ideals -- monotheism, justice, responsibility -- have become the moral basis for Western civilization.

Perhaps the reason for the relative obscurity of Shavuot is because this holiday has no obvious "symbols" of the day -- i.e. no Shofar, no Sukkah, no Chanukah Menorah.

On Shavuot, there are no symbols to distract us from the central focus of Jewish life: the Torah. So how do we commemorate Shavuot? It is a widespread custom to stay up the entire night learning Torah. And since Torah is the way to self-perfection, the Shavuot night learning is called Tikkun Leil Shavuot, which means "an act of self-perfection on the night of Shavuot."

At synagogue services on Shavuot morning, we read the biblical book of Ruth. Ruth was a non-Jewish woman whose love for God and Torah led her to convert to Judaism. The Torah intimates that the souls of eventual converts were also present at Sinai, as it says: "I am making [the covenant] both with those here today before the Lord our God, and also with those not here today." (Deut. 29:13)

Ruth has a further connection to Shavuot, in that she became the ancestor of King David, who was born on Shavuot, and died on Shavuot.

On Shavuot, it is customary to decorate the synagogue with branches and flowers. This is because Mount Sinai blossomed with flowers on the day the Torah was given. The Bible also associates Shavuot with the harvest of wheat and fruits, and marks the bringing of the first fruits to the Holy Temple as an expression of thanksgiving. (see Exodus 23:16, 34:22, Numbers 28:26)

There is a universal Jewish tradition of eating dairy foods on Shavuot. The reason has been offered by many scholars, some of which are more convincing than others. We offer a selection:

1. The Biblical book Song of Songs (4:11) refers to the sweet nourishing value of Torah by saying: "It drips from your lips, like honey and milk under your tongue."
2. The verse in Exodus 23:19 juxtaposes the holiday of Shavuot with the prohibition of mixing milk and meat. On Shavuot, we therefore eat separate meals -- one of milk and one of meat.
3. Upon receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, the Jews immediately became obligated in the laws of Sh’chita -- slaughter of animals. Since they did not have time to prepare kosher meat, they ate dairy instead.

LEADER TIP: Shavuot is all about getting the Torah, but Torah isn’t always the most exciting thing in kids’ lives. Try to connect Torah to each kid in their own unique way. There are many many ways to connect, no two are exactly the same.
QUESTIONS

1. Who wrote the Book of Ruth?
2. During which historical period did the events of the Megillah of Ruth occur?
3. Who was Naomi's husband?
4. After she returned from Moav, by what name did Naomi ask to be called?
5. How was Boaz related to Naomi?
6. Into what did Boaz tell Ruth to dip her bread?
7. Why is Elimelech's brother referred to as Ploni Almoni and not by his real name?
8. With what object did Boaz redeem Elimelech's property?
9. The people and the elders blessed Ruth that she should be like whom?
10. What was Ruth's relationship to King David?
11. List as many reasons as you can why we read Megillat Rut on Shavuot

ANSWERS

1. The Prophet Samuel (Bava Batra 14b).
2. During the era of the Shoftim, the Judges. Boaz was the shofet at the time (1:1).
3. Elimelech (1:2).
5. He was her husband's brother's son. (2:1, Rashi).
7. Since he didn't want to redeem his brother's property and thereby discharge his family duty (Rashi 4:1).
8. With a shoe (according to the Targum, a glove) (4:8).
10. She was his great-grandmother: Ruth, Oved, Yishai, David (4:22).
11. The events occurred during the harvest season. Shavuot is the harvest festival.
   - Ruth was a convert to Judaism. Conversion is an individual Kabbalas HaTorah.
   - Ruth the Moabite was permitted to marry Boaz, based on a drasha (a teaching of the Oral Law) of the verse, "A Moabite may not marry into the Congregation of Hashem" (Devarim 23:4). This hints at the unity between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah.
   - David Hamelech was born on Shavuot. The Megillah of Ruth concludes with David's lineage.
   - To teach the greatness of gemillus chassadim - acts of loving-kindness.
   - To teach that the Torah is acquired only through affliction and poverty.
   - The name "Ruth" has the numerical value of 606. At Har Sinai the Jewish People accepted 606 mitzvos, in addition to the 7 Noachide Laws which were incumbent upon them already.

I Did Not Know That!

There is a custom to eat "milchigs" on Shavuot. Pharaoh's daughter drew Moshe out of the water on the 6th of Sivan, and he was willing to be nursed only by a Hebrew woman. Therefore we recall Moshe's merit on Shavuot by eating milk foods. Furthermore, the numerical values of the letters of the Hebrew word chalav (milk) add up to 40 corresponding to the 40 days Moshe spent on Mount Sinai.

LEADER TIP: Give out points to whoever knows answers, first one to 613 points wins!
SHAVUOT ACTIVITY

GOAL: To teach the kids about the importance of renewing our acceptance and love for the Torah every single day. Every Shavuot we accept the Torah again and re-energize our excitement for Hashem’s greatest gift to mankind.

ACTIVITY: “The Chair Game”

Set up everyone in a big circle of chairs, leaving one extra empty chair in the circle. This is a movement game. The magic phrase of the game is “I got the Torah at Har Sinai together with ____”. The blank will be filled by inserting someone else’s name in the circle. The person sitting to the right of the empty sit will start off and say the first word of the sentence and move over to the empty seat (I). The person after them will then move over to the empty seat as well and say the next word (got). Then so on and so on until the person says “with” and moves over. Then the next person will move over to the empty seat and say someone else’s name in the circle. That person must then get up from wherever they are and run to the open seat. Then wherever that person came from is now the open seat and the person sitting to the right of it must immediately start again with the sentence. The idea of the game is to be the last two people in the game (it’s impossible to play the game with just two people, you need at least three. Once you get out, you stay seated for the rest of the game and everyone else who is still in must remember to skip over you the rest of the game when they move seats.

There are a number of ways to get out:

1. If you mess up the sentence by saying the wrong word.
2. If you call someone’s name who isn’t there or who is already out.
3. If you call someone’s name who is immediately to your right, not counting the people who are out who are between you and that person (since they are moving to that seat anyways).

Make sure to keep the game moving as quickly as possible. Things will get confusing pretty fast so make sure everyone keeps up! It’s a ton of fun! Enjoy!

DISCUSSION: We read and study the same exact Torah every single day of our lives, Let’s be honest, it can get pretty repetitive and boring sometimes. Shavuot is a time where we re-accept the Torah and infuse a new and improved excitement for the most special thing we have in our lives. In this game, we keep saying the same exact sentence over and over again. Although here, we don’t get bored of it despite repeating it over and over again? Why is that? It’s because we are passionate about it, because we surround ourselves with other people who are passionate about it, and we know that despite repeating the same words over and over again, each time is very different. And even when we get out of the game, or find ourselves in a tough stage in our life, it’s important to always surround ourselves with passionate people who can uplift us from our difficult times and low state. Even if we get out of one game, or have one tough day, there will always be another game to be played and there’s always tomorrow to get back on track and re-find that love of Torah.

LEADER TIP: Discuss as a group different ways to make Torah and Judaism exciting every day. Talk about what things you really connect to as well as things that you struggle connecting to and work through them together.

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"Thanks for the drink. What a great combo

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Q. The receiving of God's Torah that we celebrate on Shavuot was the highest God-connection experience in history and it happened specifically at a time when we were all united and at peace with each other. What do you think is the connection between unity and being close to God?
A. God is one. The more we make ourselves one, the more we resemble and can be more open to connecting with Him.

Q. While it is a positive value to cooperate, is there ever a time that competition can be a win-win situation and good for everybody involved?
A. Usually competition is about winning by making someone else lose, but if two people are each striving to reach their personal potential, they can use the motivating feeling of competition to each accomplish more. That type of competition is in a sense cooperating to help each other grow.

LEADER TIP: Why is being one nation so important? Should we look at the Jewish people as everyone being the same deep down or rather that everyone is different and that’s what brings us together?

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This Week in Jewish History

May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1967

Yom Yerushalayim

Yom Yerushalayim is the anniversary of the liberation and unification of Jerusalem under Jewish control that occurred during the Six Day War. Yom Yerushalayim is the anniversary of the liberation and unification of Jerusalem under Jewish control that occurred during the Six Day War. The liberation of Jerusalem in 1967 marked the first time in thousands of years that the entire city of Jerusalem, the holiest city in Judaism, was under Jewish sovereignty. The destruction of Jerusalem was a watershed event in Jewish history that began thousands of years of mourning for Jerusalem, so, it follows, that the reunification of Jerusalem should be a joyous celebration that begins the process of reversing thousands of years of destruction and exile. The observance of Yom Yerushalayim outside of the city cannot compare to its celebration in reunited Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, thousands of people march around the city and walk through the liberated Old City, where Jews were denied access from 1948 to 1967 while it was under Jordanian control. The march ends at the Kotel. Once everyone gets to the Kotel, there are speeches and concerts and celebratory dancing. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel declared that the holiday version of Pseuki d'Zimra and Hallel should be recited. According to the major religious Zionist halakhists, even those who do not recite the blessing over Hallel on Yom HaAtzmaut should recite it on Yom Yerushalayim because the liberation and reunification over the entire city of Jerusalem is said to be of an even greater miracle than Jewish political sovereignty over part of the land of Israel.

I Did Not Know That!

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TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE WEEK

HOW MANY LETTERS ARE THERE IN THE TORAH?

Email your answers to YOUTH@YOUNGISRAEL.ORG along with your NAME and AGE for a chance to win AWESOME PRIZES! Each correct answer will enter your name into a raffle that will happen once a month. Behatzlacha!

THIS JUST IN!

- A giraffe can clean its ears with its 21-inch tongue!
- Orcas (killer whales) kill sharks by torpedoing up into the shark’s stomach from underneath, causing the shark to explode.
- Ten percent of the Russian government’s income comes from the sale of vodka.

Parsha Points to Ponder...

The holiday of Shavuot is known as ZMAN MATAN TORATENU. Why is it not ZMAN KABALAT TORATENU? Why MATAN, the giving of the Torah and not KABALAT the receiving of the Torah? One answer could be that the Torah was given to us only once, at Har Sinai when our forefathers left Egypt and were on their way to the Promised Land. Then Bnei Israel stood at the foot of the mountain and heard the voice of Hashem proclaiming the Ten Commandments. Moshe later received the rest of the entire Torah. That was a one time act. After the Torah was given to us it then became our obligation to acquire it to make it our own. How is this done? By studying the Torah, by living according to its dictates and, not of lesser importance, by transmitting it to others and to the next generation to assure its survival, it becomes ours. We celebrate the day we were given the Torah on Shavuot, ZMAN MATAN TORATENU, but ZMAN KABALAT TORATENU, the time we acquire the Torah is every day when we learn and teach and observe it.
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