

Cheesecake for Shavuot

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Why celebrate a harvest?

Share the Harvest

In ancient times, during the springtime holiday of *Shavuot*, the first fruits of the harvest were offered up to God in the Temple in Jerusalem. Farmers selected the first fruits, called *bikurim* in Hebrew, from a group of seven species: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates. In this story, as the children cut the stalks of wheat, a few pieces of grain fall to the ground. Their teacher explains that these pieces are called gleanings, and that they are to be left for the poor. This is an example of the Jewish value *ma'akhil re'evim*, Hebrew for “feeding the hungry.” While most of us no longer harvest fields ourselves, we can still help address hunger by buying extra food to bring to a food pantry, volunteering at a soup kitchen, or donating to organizations that feed the hungry.

Quiet, Please

The holiday of Shavuot also celebrates the giving of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) at Mount Sinai. One legend says that when God gave the Torah at Mount Sinai, no bird twittered, no cow mooed, the whole world was silent to hear the words of the Ten Commandments. On Shavuot it's traditional to go to synagogue to hear the Ten Commandments read aloud (sorry, no pets allowed), and many people stay up all night learning Torah together. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/cheesecakeforshavuot.

Springing Ahead

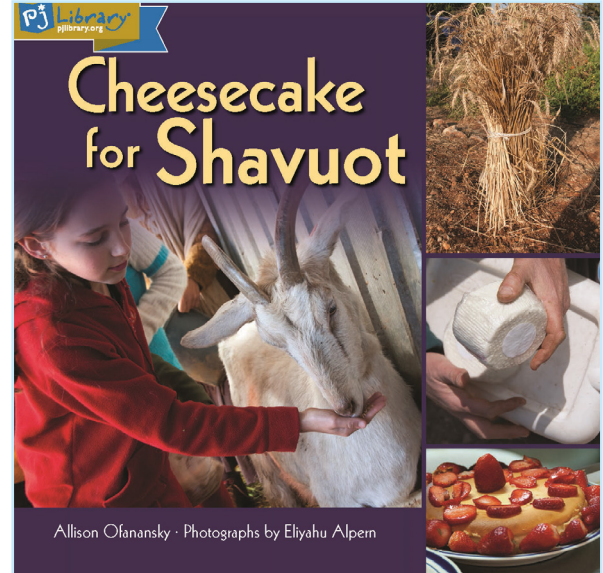
Shavuot arrives in the heart of spring, which is a time of new life. Many cultures rejoice in spring as a season of hope. The backdrop of this story highlights the ripening of the wheat, flowering fields, trees bearing fruit, and animals giving birth, but Shavuot is also a celebration of the covenant that formed between God and Israel at Sinai, a relationship born in the promise of spring.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

What's your favorite dairy treat?

Why is it important to make sure everyone has enough to eat?

Part of Shavuot is celebrating the Ten Commandments. Do you know any of those commandments?



HANDS ON!

Make a Shavuot Suncatcher

Shavuot is a spring harvest holiday. Celebrate the blooms of spring and “harvest” them in this suncatcher. Then hang it in your window to share with the world.

Supplies

Paper plate
Scissors
Transparent contact paper
Flowers and leaves

- 1 Go outside and collect flowers and leaves.
- 2 Cut out the center of a paper plate to create a circular frame.
- 3 Cover the empty center with transparent contact paper, overlapping the frame by about ½ an inch.
- 4 Stick your flowers and leaves on the contact paper.

Hang your finished work in the window and let springtime shine in!