



KOPECKS FOR BLINTZES

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Chelm stories are known for their wacky humor and unexpected turns – and this one is no different. When Yankl and Gittele want to save up for blintzes for Shavuot, they come up with a plan – but then “outsmart” themselves.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Shavuot is a spring holiday that celebrates the time more than three thousand years ago when God gave the Ten Commandments, a set of instructions for holy living, to the people of Israel. These commandments are part of the larger work of the *Torah*, the first five books of the Bible, which relates how people received the Ten Commandments and the *Torah* at Mt. Sinai following their release from slavery in Egypt.

There are a number of traditions involved in the observance of *Shavuot*. Before the holiday, homes and synagogues are decorated with leafy branches and flowers as a reminder that the *Torah* was given on a mountain of greenery. It is customary to stay awake through the night preceding the holiday, learning *Torah*. In the morning, the Ten Commandments are read aloud in the synagogue; the congregation stands for this reading, as if they themselves are standing at Mt. Sinai with their ancestors. Festive meals are made, traditionally centered around dairy products, as we see in the story *Kopecks for Blintzes*. One reason for this custom is that the *Torah* is likened to milk; just as milk provides physical nourishment, the *Torah* provides spiritual sustenance to those who study it and strive to live out its principles.

The wisdom of the *Torah* continues to guide Jewish life today, and has influenced the laws of many nations around the world.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Here are a few suggested activities to help your family celebrate *Shavuot* together:

Ten Commandments discussion – Choose one of the Ten Commandments to discuss as a family, such as “You shall not steal” or “You shall not covet.” (The list can be found in the Bible in Exodus 20:1-17 or via an Internet search.) Why is it wrong to steal? What does it mean to covet what other people have? How can we avoid these things? What are some other ways that we might sometimes treat family members and friends unfairly? How can we show each other more love and respect?

Shavuot and nature – Have fun decorating your home with greenery and flowers. Enjoy making small flower wreaths for your children to wear on their heads, or weave flowers and branches together to make garlands. You can also make artistic renderings; encourage your children to draw pictures of flowers and trees, and find prominent places to hang them in your home.

Shavuot in the kitchen -- Choose a special dairy dish to make together, perhaps a dessert such as cheesecake or blintzes like the ones Yankl and Gitele long for in this story. Get everyone involved in the baking. When the work is done, enjoy the tasty fruits of your labor together!