



Top Ten Count Up! Building up to Shavuot



During an ordinary school calendar year, attention to Shavuot may become marginalized or even overlooked as it competes with other dazzling commemorations and celebrations, and this is especially true if the holiday falls after the school year has concluded. This year we have an opportunity to capitalize on the continued presence of our learners and their families and can engage with them around this holiday.

Shavuot is surrounded by counting; it falls 49 days after the second day of Passover and there is a tradition of daily counting – called the Omer – between those holidays. One of several components celebrated on Shavuot is receiving the Torah, specifically Ten Commandments. This year, let’s build anticipation, expand the learning, and embrace a Jewish tradition by counting up to Shavuot. It’s good Jewish practice, good education, and good for thriving.

Below you will see elements related to Shavuot along with suggestions for how to use them as a springboard for relevant and meaningful family conversations and/or activities. Send one to your families each day as a count-up to build the anticipation and excitement for Shavuot. Enjoy and *hag sameach!*

	A Piece from Shavuot	Bringing it Home
1	Shavuot is one of three major festivals when Jews would travel to the Temple in Jerusalem. These festivals are called “ <i>Shalosh Regalim</i> ”, or “Three Pilgrimages”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share some stories of travel among your family. • Where are some places parents traveled to when they were young adults or children themselves? • If children have been on an airplane or out of the country, what stood out for them on that first experience? • What is interesting about visiting a synagogue or other Jewish places in a foreign city or country? • Even if you haven’t traveled (yet!) to Jerusalem, what is something you know about that special city?
2	“ <i>Hag HaBikkurim</i> ” or “Holiday of the First Fruits” is another name of Shavuot. To show appreciation for a successful farming season people would bring a best sample of their harvest as an offering to the Temple at this time. It could have been one of the crops grown in Israel such as wheat, barley, grapes, dates, olives or pomegranates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever grown fruits, vegetables or herbs at home or in your yard? If yes, revisit the steps needed for a successful harvest. Does the final product taste different from what is bought at the store? • Most of our food today is purchased from stores. How can we show appreciation for those that grow the food we consume? And in current times, those that deliver our food?





Top Ten Count Up!

Building up to Shavuot



3	<p>Another name for Shavuot is “<i>Zman Matan Torah</i>”, or “Giving of the Torah” connecting with another aspect of Shavuot: the tradition that the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mt Sinai on Shavuot.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a rule or guideline in your family that is important? • What is a teaching, Jewish or universal, that has been passed down to you by someone else? What is the concept and who was the person? Why is it important to you and how has it influenced you in any way?
4	<p>Shavuot is the only Jewish holiday where it's traditional to eat dairy foods. It's a reminder that we entered the land of Israel, also known as a land of milk and honey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check out this collection of dairy recipes and find one or two your family will try. • Israel is called the land of Milk and Honey. What food or drink would best describe New York, the U.S, or your neighborhood?
5	<p>There is a custom on Shavuot to dress up the synagogue with flowers and greenery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill your home with flowers – the type that don't require any water! Click here for simple DIY instructions. • It's been quite a few weeks since you've been inside your synagogue building. Share some of your favorite spots you're looking forward to seeing when you return.
6	<p>Israel has some unique ways to celebrate Shavuot, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ dancing tractors on kibbutzim as a modern way to celebrate harvest. ◇ water fights because the Torah, is often compared to water, such as the aspect of water giving life and promoting growth; bit by bit water can become a river and a person who studies Torah bit by bit can become a scholar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Together watch these videos: Celebrating Shavuot on a Kibbutz (check out the “first fruits” of the kibbutz at minute 1:00 and the tractor dance at minute 4:25!) Shavuot Water Fight in Tel Aviv • Discuss what you liked and found surprising about these celebrations. What would you like to see brought to the U.S.? • Have a water balloon toss outside, or ice cube toss inside; see if you can get to 49 – the number of days of the Omer. • Check out these home based water activities for younger children.





Top Ten Count Up!

Building up to Shavuot



7	The Book of Ruth is read on Shavuot, which conveys several important messages such as loyalty to family, kindness to others, and the inclusivity of the Jewish People.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just like Ruth, the central character in the Book of Ruth, there are key members of families even if they're not blood relatives. • Share thoughts about people who are not legally related but who are closely connected to your family. How did they get connected? What is special about that relationship?
8	Shavuot celebrates the gift of the Torah given to the Jewish People and the special relationship between Torah, God and the Jewish People.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share some stories of love and relationships in your family. • How did the grandparents, or great grandparents, meet? • Who was mom or dad's first boyfriend/girlfriend when they were younger? • Parents: share with kids three traits you think are important for a romantic partner.
9	Shavuot is one of numerous Jewish holidays where <i>Hallel</i> is recited during services. <i>Hallel</i> is from the Book of Psalms and is all about praise and gratitude.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a family praise party! Go around and each person share a complement about one member. Rotate so everyone receives their own "hallel".
10	About 200 years ago, the Reform Movement introduced Confirmation as a way for Jewish teens to "confirm" their commitment to Judaism a few years after their bar/bat Mitzvah. Confirmation typically happens on or close to Shavuot.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is one way your family confirms its commitment to Judaism? • What is one way your family has, or would like to enhance Jewish connection, involvement or observance? • How does your family demonstrate your connection to each other and a value that you hold important?

