

Shavuot

Shavuot is a Jewish holiday that celebrates the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. In English, it is known as the Festival of Weeks since the word *shavuot* means “weeks” in Hebrew. The holiday marks the conclusion of the seven-week period of counting the Omer (an ancient measure of grain) that begins on the second day of Passover. Shavuot is one of the three Jewish pilgrimage festivals, along with Passover and Sukkot.

It is observed on the sixth day of the Jewish calendar month of Sivan as well as on the seventh day of Sivan in many communities outside of Israel. This usually falls sometime in late May or early June in the Gregorian calendar. In 2026, Shavuot will take place from sundown on **May 21st** to nightfall on **May 23rd**.

The observance of Shavuot includes several customs and traditions. Many Jews stay up all night studying Torah, a practice known as *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*. Synagogues often host communal study sessions and services during this time. Another custom is to eat dairy foods, such as cheesecake and blintzes. There are several explanations for this tradition, including that the Torah is compared to milk and honey, and that the Hebrew word for milk, *halav*, has the numerical value of 40, which corresponds to the 40 days and nights that Moses spent on Mount Sinai receiving the Torah.

One of the important themes of Shavuot is renewal of the commitment to the Torah. The holiday is an opportunity to recommit oneself to studying and practicing Jewish teachings, and to strengthening one's connection to the Jewish community. The Counting of the Omer leading up to Shavuot is seen as a time of personal growth and reflection.

Shavuot is also a time for community and family gatherings. Many people host festive meals and invite friends and family to celebrate together. It is traditional in some communities to decorate homes and synagogues with flowers and greenery. One explanation for this practice connects it to Shavuot's role as a harvest festival. Shavuot is referred to in the Torah as *Hag Ha-Katzir* (Festival of the Harvest).

Accommodating Employees

In preparing to accommodate employees for Shavuot, employers should consider:

- **Scheduling:** Be aware of the dates of the holiday and make scheduling accommodations for work obligations as necessary.
- **Communication:** To help promote a culture of inclusivity and respect for all religious traditions in the workplace, communicate clearly with employees about the holiday and its significance.
- **Time off requests:** Be prepared to accommodate time off requests from employees who observe Shavuot. Also ensure that employees are aware of their company's policies for requesting time off.

By taking these considerations into account, employers can help create a workplace that is supportive and accommodating of all employees, regardless of their religious beliefs or practices.

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