



## **Shavuot Primer 5786 / 2026**

Shavuot is the second of the **Shalosh Regalim** (the Three Pilgrimage Festivals). Its central theme is **Matan Torah** - the giving of the Torah. The holiday falls on the 6th of the Hebrew month of Sivan, traditionally marking the revelation at Mount Sinai. On Shavuot, we read the account of this event, including the **Ten Commandments**, from Parshat Yitro.

Shavuot also has an important place in the biblical agricultural cycle. It marks the beginning of the **wheat harvest** and is associated with the mitzvah of bringing **Bikkurim** (first fruits) to the Temple. While this practice is not observed today without a Temple, our tradition teaches that Shavuot is a time of judgment regarding the produce of trees.

On a deeper level, this idea of trees is often understood spiritually. The Torah is called a “Tree of Life,” and its “fruits” are the insights and growth we gain through learning. Shavuot, then, is a time when we receive our portion in Torah for the coming year. This helps explain the custom of **increased Torah learning on Shavuot**, especially the practice of staying up to learn on the first night (*Tikkun Leil Shavuot*).

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## Megillat Ruth and Conversion

On the second day of Shavuot (outside of Israel), we read **Megillat Ruth**. One reason is that its story takes place during the harvest season. More deeply, Ruth is the model of a sincere convert to Judaism.

There is also a thematic connection: at Mount Sinai, the Jewish people entered into a covenant with God, often understood as a form of collective “conversion.” In that sense, Shavuot celebrates not only the giving of the Torah, but also the idea of choosing and committing to a life of Torah.

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## Customs and Practices

Unlike holidays such as Passover or Sukkot, Shavuot has **no unique ritual objects** (like matzah, lulav, or shofar). Instead, its observance centers on:

- Torah study (especially at night)
  - Hearing the Ten Commandments in synagogue
  - Reading Megillat Ruth
  - Eating dairy foods (a widespread custom, though not biblically mandated)
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## Dates

This year, Shavuot falls:

- **Thursday night, May 21 – Friday, May 22 (first day)**
  - **Friday night, May 22 – Shabbat, May 23 (second day, in the Diaspora)**
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CONGREGATION SCHARA TZEDEC  
3476 Oak Street • Vancouver, BC V6H 2J1  
Tel: (604) 736-7607 • Fax: (604) 730-1622  
www.scharatzedeck.com • info@scharatzedeck



## Candle Lighting

On Yom Tov, one may **transfer an existing flame**, but not create a new one.

- It is recommended to light a **yahrzeit candle before Yom Tov begins** so you have a flame available.
- **Thursday night (First Night of Shavuot):** Light candles **before sunset ( 8:41 PM)** **The Blessings recited over lighting the candles for the first night are:**

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של יום טוב.

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'Olam asher kideshanu b'mitzvotav ve'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov*

Blessed are You, Ad-nai our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us **to kindle the lights of Yom Tov.**

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שֶהֶחַיָנו וְקִיָּמָנו וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵהָ הַזֶּה

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

- **Friday night (Second Night / Shabbat):** Light from an existing flame at **8:41 PM** **The Blessing recited over lighting the candles on second night, Friday is:**

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של שבת ויום טוב

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'Olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Shabbat v'Yom Tov.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to kindle the lights of Shabbat and Yom Tov.

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## Havdalah

On **Saturday night (Motzei Shabbat/Yom Tov)**, Havdalah is made on: Wine, Spices, and Flame with the standard *HaMavdil* blessing.

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## Yizkor

Yizkor will be recited on **Shabbat morning** (second day of Shavuot in the Diaspora). A Yizkor candle should be lit either before the holiday begins on Thursday night or from an existing flame during the holiday (if needed)

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The full schedule of classes and services can be found at: **scharatzedeck.com**



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