

שבועות

*Shavuot/Pentecost*

*at home*



## Why is Shavuot/Pentecost so important?

Shavuot is the shortest and simplest of the three main Biblical festivals. It is also the most overlooked. The key to unlocking the power and importance of this festival is making the connection between the giving of God's commands to Moses on Mount Sinai and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem. Both events occurred to mark the same festival and create bookends to the revelation of God's plan for us.

In Jewish tradition, it is the giving of God's commands that is celebrated. Scripture reading and study goes on throughout the night. For most Christians however, it is the importance of the giving of the Holy Spirit that is central. Yet both are a true reflection of this festival and when you put them together you receive the fullness of God's plans and purposes for both events.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai after receiving God's commands and found the Israelites worshipping a golden calf, the wrath of God broke out and 3000 people perished (Ex 32:28). God's commands are perfect but the imperfect nature of fallen humanity mean that they cannot be kept. The standard reveals God and His holiness to the people but at the same time it condemns them with its perfection. If we fast forward to Jerusalem fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, the power to live out God's commands is released and 3000 people find new life (Acts 2:41). They are transformed from the inside out as the very presence of God fills them and dwells within them. This same presence which was kept behind curtains for the people's safety is now available to all who believe.

We must balance both events to understand their significance. The Word of God does not lose its importance or its power when the Spirit comes. We are not to choose one or the other but both simultaneously. One without the other leads to an imbalance in our walk. Both together leads to growth and power in the life of every believer. As we celebrate this festival we celebrate all that God has done. We celebrate that God not only saves and releases captives; He equips and empowers them to live transformed lives in the fullness of their new identity in Him.

## Shavuot at home:

This is a short guide to enable us to all celebrate this festival in our homes. Scripture tells us that everyone's presence was desired by God and that He would meet with them at His appointed time (Ex 23:17). This festival is a meeting point between God and His people and is a place where He reveals and refreshes His plans and purposes for us.

Shavuot is a far simpler affair than Passover and Tabernacles with very little ritual around the meal or the wider festival. So we will focus on reading and discussing the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Light the festival lights:

*Blessed are you O Lord our God King of the Universe who gave us your Scriptures and the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit to light our way.*

**Read/Listen:** Exodus 19 & Acts 2

### The Meal:

This should be something mouth watering and delicious to make it a joyful and significant night. For the main dish, something milk-based is traditional. I love making macaroni and cheese or a vegetable lasagne with aubergine and mozzarella. Shavuot is the only festival where leavened bread is offered and I love buying a special loaf like rosemary and sea salt or a seeded sourdough. For dessert, a cheesecake or ice cream is perfect. A real feast!

**After the meal:** Take time to discuss the Word. Exodus 19, Acts 2 or...

**The Ten commandments:** (Ex 20:1-17) Discuss the cornerstone of God's commands and His revelation of how to live with Him and each other. How are these still relevant to us and the world around us?

**Ruth:** This book is traditionally read during this festival as it takes place during the harvest. It is a beautiful foretaste of how Jesus' salvation would go to the ends of the earth. Ruth, a Gentile woman grafted into Israel, becomes the great-grandmother of King David. Her commitment and love for the Jewish people is held up as an example in every Jewish home.

***"Your people shall be my people, and your God my God!"***