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What Does Shavuot Look Like To You?

If I were to ask you to stop reading this article and close your eyes to “picture” Shavuot, what would you envision?

Are you picturing Har Sinai? That smaller mountain, humbly chosen for the most significant event in human history. The Midrash paints it adorned with flowers, blooming in honor of the revelation. The sky darkens, yet the atmosphere is illuminated — you see thunder and hear lightning, a miraculous reversal of the senses. All of Am Yisrael — men, women, and children — gather as one. לעיני כל העם. כי ביום השלישי ירד ה' After three days of intense spiritual preparation, we stand there, beautifully dressed, not just physically but spiritually — trembling and excited, waiting. קול שופר הולך וחזיק מאוד. And then it happens: the voice of God.

Maybe for you, it's the learning experience that defines Shavuot. You connect through the Tikkun Leil Shavuot, that electric atmosphere where Torah study becomes a communal act of love. In batei midrash and shuls across the world, young, old and all ages in between immerse themselves in Torah — the air buzzes with questions, answers, insights and “ah-ha”s of new understandings. That

magical night becomes a reenactment of Sinai, a collective reaching upwards.

Perhaps you find your connection in the story of Ruth in the Megillah — the Moabite princess turned Jewish heroine. Her chessed, her loyalty, her journey of personal sacrifice — all resonate deeply. She could have chosen ease and comfort, but she chose truth and faith. “Your people will be my people, and your God my God.” With those words, Ruth enters not just a new nation, but a new destiny. She becomes the great-grandmother of David HaMelech. Her story, read on Shavuot, reminds us that Torah is not just received — it is chosen, often through tears, effort, and courage.

Do you envision the agricultural joy of the first fruits — the Bikurim? Shavuot is Chag HaBikkurim, after all. The Torah commands us to bring the first and best of our produce to the Beit HaMikdash, as a gesture of gratitude to the Source of all blessing. Can you see it? Farmers from across the land, walking or dancing up to Yerushalayim, carrying baskets adorned with gold and doves, accompanied by music and festivity. It's Aliyah LaRegel at its most joyous — the intersection of physical sustenance and spiritual offering, celebrating complete dependence and reliance on Hashem. May we be worthy to once again experience this firsthand, speedily in our days.

Or maybe for you, Shavuot is something more intimate. Less about communal spectacle and more about personal bond. Maybe you close your eyes and picture yourself

standing alone before a Sefer Torah. Owning it. Accepting it. Loving it. Clinging to it. You don't need to hear thunder or see lightning — you feel the weight and the warmth of Torah in your soul. You know that this is yours. This is who you are.

That is where I find myself. This is my Shavuot.

Torah is my lifeline. My oxygen.

Our world might seem filled with uncertainty, insecurity, and instability. But that's furthest from the truth. We have Torah.

In a world that feels increasingly untethered — a world of shifting values, moral confusion, and constant noise — Torah is my anchor. My stake in the ground. When the headlines scream instability and the voices around us blur the lines between right and wrong, I look to Torah and I feel clarity. I feel truth. Torah doesn't shift. Torah doesn't scream. Torah speaks — directly, calmly, eternally.

When I learn Torah, I feel Hashem speaking to me. Personally. Lovingly. Even when there is rebuke. Torah is not just a document of law or a collection of wisdom — it is the living voice of God. It gives shape to my days, meaning to my choices, and direction to my doubts. It builds the framework of my home

and the language of my relationships.

Shavuot is the anniversary of that gift. Not just the giving of the Torah — Matan Torah — but the ongoing receiving of Torah — Kabbalat HaTorah. Because we don't just commemorate what happened. We re-enter it. We say “Na’aseh v’nishma” all over again. We stand beneath the mountain, in shul, in our homes, in our minds — and we accept. Every year I remind my teen students: if you really listen during the night, you might just hear the thunder of Har Sinai.

And maybe that's the most powerful image of all: a people who keep returning. Who keep saying yes. Who keep clinging to the words, and through them, to the One who gave them.

So this Shavuot, close your eyes for a moment. Picture your Sinai.

Is it grand? Communal? Quiet? Joyful? Emotional?

Whatever it is — may it be real. And may we all find ourselves not just remembering Shavuot, but living it. ■

The **Airleys** have built **Beit Binyamin**, a retreat center in Tzfat for those directly affected by the war. Soldiers, Zaka members, security forces, bereaved families and widows can come for respite, relaxation and rejuvenation. For more information and to donate, visit Beitbinyamin.org

Shavuot is the chag of receiving the Torah. We celebrate with festive meals and holiday dishes. The Clara Hammer Chicken Fund provides the poor and needy with the ability to enjoy this and other Chagim and Shabbatot.



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