

## Shavuot: Summer Activities to Do at Home

Thursday, May 28, 2020 to Friday, May 29, 2020 (All day)



Shavuot is an often ignored and forgotten Jewish holiday. But the holiday commemorates a very important event: the giving of the Torah, which includes the 10 Commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It is one of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals the Torah commands us to celebrate. *Shavuot* is the Hebrew word for weeks. It takes place 7 weeks from the 2nd day of Passover, or exactly 50 days after Passover. **The biblical story associated with Shavuot, the Book of Ruth, gives us a phenomenal and beautiful opportunity to talk to our children about how we treat others.**

### Here is an easy-to-retell synopsis of the Book of Ruth:

There are three main characters: **Ruth, Naomi and Boaz**. Each of them, in different ways, provides us with examples of kindness, charity and loyalty.

- 1) Ruth is Naomi's daughter-in-law. Sadly, Naomi's husband and sons die while they are living in Moab (a country near modern Israel) and Naomi decides to go back to Israel to be near her extended family. Despite the fact that her family all lives in Moab, Ruth decides to go with Naomi so that Naomi will not be alone.
- 2) The two women take on the difficult journey and arrive in Israel with very little money or food. According to Jewish law, farmers are required to leave some of their crops in the field so that the poor and the widowed could come and gather it.
- 3) Ruth went each day and collected barley and wheat in the fields.
- 4) Boaz, the farm owner and a distant relative of Naomi's, had heard about the kindness that Ruth had shown Naomi and ordered his workers to leave extra grain where Ruth could get it. Soon, Ruth and Boaz fell in love and were married. Several generations later, their grandson became a king of Israel: King David.

## **Finding the Values**

**It would make a good Disney movie, right?** The family sticks together through hardships and it all works out for a happy ending. While we wait for the film to be produced, however, the Book of Ruth shows us examples of loyalty, compassion, kindness and acts of charity. These themes are often difficult for young children to understand. It is actually developmentally appropriate to be egocentric when you are very young. But understanding these concepts is critical in the advancement of your child's moral and Jewish development.

Ruth's story is very relatable and gives us the opportunity to ask questions and play out these values, giving young children a context to these sometimes-abstract concepts.

### ***Story related questions to ask your children:***

- **Why do you think farmers have to leave some of the barley for the poor?**
- **How do you think the people who don't have enough food feel?**
- **How do you think it feels to give them food?**
- **What things do we have too much of that we might give to people that don't have?**
- **Why do you think Ruth decided to go with Naomi?**
- **Ruth had to make a decision to leave her family behind to go with Naomi. How do you think Naomi felt about that? How do you imagine Ruth felt?**
- **How do you think it made Naomi feel when Ruth decided to stay with her?**
- **What do you imagine that Boaz was thinking when he decided to leave extra food for Ruth?**
- **What would you have done if you were Ruth? Or Boaz?**

### **Values to practice throughout the summer and always:**

#### ***Tzedakah (Charity):***

Young children understand "stuff." They know what it means to have toys, clothes, and food, and they can also understand not having stuff. Take advantage of Shavuot happening in the spring/summer and do some spring/summer cleaning with your family. Telling this story and asking some questions can be a great beginning to weeding through old toys or clothes that no longer fit and bagging them up for donation. Include

your children in the entire process. Go together to the Goodwill or Salvation Army to drop off your contribution.

***Loyalty/Friendship:***

These concepts can be harder for young children. However, there are countless social situations in their young lives--sharing, waiting your turn, someone else getting to be the line leader--in which your child has to "sacrifice" what they want for someone else, even though it was hard. Use a real life example and compare what they did (or could have done) to the way that Ruth acted or the way that Boaz made sure that Ruth had enough food to take care of both her and Naomi.

***Kindness/Compassion:***

We all want to raise children who are kind and compassionate. Research has shown that the most important predictor of children who grow up with a strong sense of these traits is parents who model kind and compassionate behavior. But what does that really mean?

- First and foremost is to teach them to be kind to themselves. We can't practice compassion unless we first treat ourselves kindly. This will present itself most clearly when you make a mistake. What kind of self-talk are you modeling for your child? And how does he react when he makes a mistake?
- "Catch" them in moments of kindness and label it for them. "I loved watching you sharing that toy. It was a very kind thing to do." Or "I noticed that when that girl was sad, you wanted to give her a hug. That was very kind of you." (The opposite should also be true--use the word "unkind" to label behavior where they did not act in a way that was compassionate towards someone else. Talk to them about what other choice they could have made.)

**If you catch kids being kind in a video or picture, please send it to us to display on our Kindness wall**

## **Make a Kindness Trophy:**



- **Print or draw the trophy and heart below on heavy paper. Cut them out.**
- **Paste the heart on the trophy and write “KINDNESS TROPHY” on the cup.**

**Award it to a family member when you “catch them doing something kind”.**

**Give your family opportunities to be kind to others in a more “structured” way.**

Volunteer together at a soup kitchen; participate in a walk for a cause, clean up in the park. , Etc.

**Retell the story of Ruth over again.** Like a treasure hunt, look for all the examples of kindness. In the story.

### ***What It's All About***

Values like these are the building blocks for creating a compassionate and kind world. Using stories as a way to initiate conversations gives our children a chance to see these concepts in action and outside of themselves. Only then can they internalize it and enact it in their own lives. It is an amazing thing to see empathy between two young children, or to see compassion exist in a concrete way for your young child. The more we offer our children ways to see the world through a kind lens, the more perspective they are able to generate themselves and closer their actions will come to those of Ruth and of Boaz.

### ***Make your Own Ten Commandments***

Read the Ten Good Rules (below) with your children. Spend some time coming up with Ten Commandments for your family. Have your children think of commandments to improve family life, such as, share your toys with your siblings, or spend dinnertime together at least three nights per week. Write them on the back of the Ten Good Rules from the Torah. Put them on your refrigerator or somewhere you will always see them and be reminded how to act.

## **Ten Good Rules**

- 1. There is only one God.**
- 2. We should not make pretend gods.**
- 3. God's name is special.**
- 4. Remember Shabbat is a day to rest and say thank you.**
- 5. Listen to your parents and take care of them.**
- 6. Do not hurt other people.**
- 7. Love and look after everyone in your family.**
- 8. Do not take things that belong to other people.**
- 9. Do not say things that are not true.**
- 10. Be happy with the things that you have.**

## Values Building Blocks:

Using your family's **10 Good Rules**, mark each of the ten building blocks in your packet with a picture or word to indicate how we are to act to "keep" it. Keep the blocks where you can easily play with them to help keep these rules in mind and in our heart.

## Make an Edible Torah:

**Make an Edible Torah –here's a fairly healthy version.**

### Ingredients:

**1 flat tortilla per child**

**2 pretzel rods per child**

**Soft cheese spread**

**1 licorice string per child**

**Directions: Cut the rounded edge off the top and bottom of the tortilla. Spread a soft cheese mixture over the tortilla. Put a pretzel rod on the left and right edge of the tortilla. Wrap the tortilla around the pretzel rods, starting at each side and meeting in the middle of the tortilla. Use the licorice string to tie around the "torah." Enjoy!**

## Visit PJ Library to Find more Shavuot Recipes

**7 Simple Shavuot Recipes Kids Can Make:**

<https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/april-2018/7-shavuot-recipes-that-kids-can-make-on-their-own>

## Additional Activities:

**You can make Naomi, Ruth and Boaz Spoon puppets to act out the story of Ruth.**



Materials: a wooden spoon for each child, googly eyes, felt squares, rubber bands, tape, yarn for hair, markers, other materials for decoration (foil, fur cotton balls, etc.)

Directions: have each child choose a character from the story. Tape or glue yarn to the back of the spoon for the hair (Use yarn for a beard as well). Wrap a felt sheet around the spoon, gathering it at the neck. Fasten the gathers around the spoon with a rubber band wrapped tightly around the neck. Use glue-on googly eyes or paint eyes and a nose and mouth on the face of the spoon. Add head covering and other decorations to make each character. When the puppets are done, take turns acting out the story.

**Shavuot, Summer and Flowers:** There is a legend that tells that the Israelites **found** Mount Sinai blooming and lush with greenery and flowers. The custom of decorating our homes and synagogues with garlands and baskets of flowers comes from this legend. Some synagogues decorate the Torah scrolls with flower wreaths. The following are some suggestions for making flowers so that you can decorate your home:

***These Flowers are made from our hand patterns because it is with our hands that we accomplish our good works of compassion and tzedakah.***



### **Make Hand Flowers to decorate your home or classroom**

Supplies needed:

- A paper plate
- Colorful construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue (or a stapler)

Trace a child's hand on colorful construction paper, at least 10 times.

Cut out the hand tracings.

Glue or staple a circle of handprint tracings (fingers pointing outwards) around the outside of the plate - the fingers are the flower's petals.

Glue or staple a second circle of handprint tracings (fingers pointing outwards) just inside the first circle

Glue or staple a third circle of handprint tracings at the center of the plate. Glue a small paper circle in the center of the flower.



### **Handprint Paper Flowers bouquet**

Here is another flower project made from a child's handprint (on paper) stapled to a straw. You can make an entire bouquet of flowers for a great Shavuot decoration.

#### **Supplies needed:**

Construction paper

- Pencil
- Scissors
- Green pipe cleaners (or straws)
- Tape or glue
- Stapler

- Trace a child's hand on construction paper. Cut the tracing out.
- Curl each of the fingers around a pencil.
- Using the palm of the handprint, form a cone (with the fingers curling outwards). Glue or tape the cone together.
- Staple the flower to a pipe cleaner or a drinking straw. Staple or tape the leaves to the straw.
- Draw some leaves on green construction paper, and then cut them out.
- Staple or tape the leaves to the straw.
- Make a few of these flowers for a beautiful bouquet.

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