



The Divine Present

Topic

Shavuot

Grade Level(s)

Primary

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will

- Be able to explain that we celebrate receiving the Torah on Shavuot
- Be able to explain that the Torah contains laws and narratives of the Jewish People
- Reflect on why the Torah is important to us

Materials needed

Wax Sticks (e.g. Wikki Stix) or Pipe Cleaners

Background for Teachers

According to the Torah, Shavuot is an agricultural holiday on which people are obligated to bring their *bikkurim* (first fruits) to Jerusalem and offer them in the *Beit Hamikdash* (Temple).

The Talmud ascribes the date of giving the Torah to the 6th of Sivan (Babylonian Talmud Tractate *Shabbat* 88b), which is the date of Shavuot on the set calendar. Thus Shavuot became not just an agricultural holiday but also a holiday that celebrates when *B'nei Yisrael* (the Children of Israel) received the Torah. This celebration of Torah has led to many traditions associated with receiving the Torah. These traditions include:

- *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*. Many Jews have a custom of learning Torah all night or at least attending a late-night class.
- Eating Cheesecake and Other Dairy Items. One source for this tradition is in *Shir HaShirim* (Song of Songs), which compares the Torah to honey and milk (4:11)



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- Reading *Megillat Ruth* (the Scroll of Ruth). In addition to the agricultural motifs in Ruth, the narrative details Ruth's agreeing to accept the commandments of the Israelites, which *B'nei Yisrael* accept when they receive the Torah.

Description of Activities

1. Ask students to think of an important present they have received from someone special.
2. Explain to students that they will build wax-stick/pipe-cleaner models of their presents.
3. Hand out wax sticks/pipe cleaners to students and let them mold their clay.
4. Ask for a few volunteers:
 - a. What is the present?
 - b. Who gave it to you?
 - c. Why did that person give it to you?
 - d. How did you feel when you received the present?
 - e. How was the present more special because it came from someone special?
5. Explain that we celebrate receiving the Torah on Shavuot.
6. Teach students the song *Torah Tziva Lanu Moshe*, the words of which come from *Devarim* 33:4. You can find a video with hand motions [here](#).
7. Ask students what is in the Torah. Students should be able to identify two categories: laws and narratives/stories.
8. Ask students why each category is important. Some possibilities include:
 - a. The narratives give the history of the Jewish people.
 - b. The narratives teach us how people should act.
 - c. The laws give all Jews something in common.
 - d. The laws tell us what Jews do.
9. Ask students why receiving the Torah from God makes the Torah a more special present.